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MINISTRY: AN EXAMINATION AND INTEGRATION OF PAULINE  
THOUGHT AND SEWARD HILTNER'S FUNCTIONAL THEOLOGY

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Presented to  
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of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Religion

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by  
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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Ministry has a rich heritage as a Christian concept. One can trace the influence of the concept of ministry from earliest Christianity to the present day. Throughout this time there have been individuals designated as ministers, and these persons have been associated with particular forms of ministry. The Church itself has been cognizant of its duty to minister to its membership and to the world. Not only has ministry been understood as a designation for certain individuals, and the tasks of the individuals and the Church as a whole; it has been understood as a fundamental concept of the Christian faith. As a concept, the ramifications of ministry spread between the mundane and the cosmological.

In recent years ministry has not been dealt with as a concept of great consequence. For the most part, the formal study of ministry has been relegated to minister's handbooks and minister's guidebooks.<sup>1</sup> Usually these books do not explore ministry as a concept; nor do they interpret ministry from a consistent conceptual base. Supposedly, the handbooks are practical tools through which a minister can refine the techniques of his ministry. Yet rarely do they explain who is a minister and what is ministry.

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<sup>1</sup>For example, James L. Christensen, *The Minister's Service Handbook* (Westwood: Revell, 1960).

Besides the lack of formal study of the concept of ministry there is another way in which it has diminished in popularity as a concept. In common speech the terms minister and ministry are becoming less and less abstract in reference. The word minister has come to commonly refer only to the clergyman. The activity of ministry has become synonymous with the traditional activities of the Church; activities such as worship, Christian education, pastoral care, and social outreach. In other words, the current popular understanding of ministry is grounded in concrete traditional forms rather than an abstract concept.

Ministry is a fundamental concept of the Christian faith which has become less influential on the contemporary scene. This dissertation will attempt to recapture the essential elements of ministry and formulate them into a revitalized concept of ministry. Thus, the purpose of this dissertation is to propose a revitalized concept of ministry.

The purpose will be accomplished through examining and integrating two outlooks on ministry. The first outlook to be examined will be that of the Apostle Paul. Paul's viewpoint is important because his letters are the "most direct and earliest primary sources from the beginnings of Christianity."<sup>2</sup> His letters are the earliest Christian documents which the modern Church possesses. Paul provides

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<sup>2</sup>Wayne A. Meeks (ed.) "Introduction," in his *The Writings of St. Paul* (New York: Norton, 1972), p. xiii.

the earliest Christian usage of the Greek terms which are translated as "minister" and "ministry." In terms of chronology, Paul's concept of ministry is the closest to exposing Jesus' thoughts.

Paul's outlook is important, because ministry is for him a vital and fundamental concept. It exists at the core of Paul's understanding of Christianity. For him, ministry is not just an expression of Christian faith; it is also a theological concept of great significance. One seeking a vital concept of ministry ought to look to one who possesses such a concept, and such a person is Paul.

After examining Paul's concept of ministry, the outlook of a contemporary scholar will be studied. The contemporary scholar is Seward Hiltner. Though Hiltner is best known for his contributions to the field of pastoral psychology, it is in the area of theology that his thoughts are important for this dissertation. In his book, *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, Seward Hiltner proposes a conceptual model for ministry.

The main purpose of *Preface to Pastoral Theology* is to present an adequate theoretical framework through which the feasibility and importance of developing a rigorous pastoral theology can be seen. The theoretical framework Hiltner presents rests on a model he has proposed for organizing theological knowledge and study. The model contains two major subdivisions under which the potential perspectives from which theology can be studied are listed. One subdivision lists the logic-centered perspectives such as Bible, doctrine, and ethics. The other subdivision lists the operation-centered areas. The

operation-centered perspectives constitute the essence of Christian ministry and provide Seward Hiltner's conceptual model of ministry.

Seward Hiltner's concept of ministry is significant for this dissertation for several reasons. One reason is that his concept of ministry is the result of theological reflection on the traditional forms of ministry present in the contemporary church. By reflecting on the traditional forms of ministry as they exist in practice, Hiltner is able to view ministry from a perspective not available to Paul. This approach also has merit because any attempt to propose a revitalized concept of ministry needs to take account of contemporary usage of the term.

Seward Hiltner's model for organizing theological knowledge discloses that an operation-centered approach to ministry, such as his own, ought to complement the logic-centered viewpoints of ministry. Studying Paul's concept of ministry is a logic-centered endeavor. Thus, according to Hiltner's model, his concept of ministry ought to complement Paul's.

Another reason Hiltner's outlook on ministry is significant is that it is fundamental and vital to his own understanding of the Christian faith. For Hiltner, ministry is as important to theological understanding as study of the Bible or doctrine. In a day in which ministry is becoming an increasingly less influential concept, the centrality of the concept to Hiltner is significant.

Having examined the opinions of Paul the Apostle and Seward Hiltner, the next step will be to critically evaluate each of them.

Both men are limited in the scope and depth of their vision and these limitations need to be understood. At the same time the unique contributions of these men to ministry and its study must be noticed.

After examining and criticizing Paul and Hiltner, the process of integrating their thoughts will begin. First, points at which their outlooks differ dramatically and persistently will be noted. Two men living in such entirely different worlds as Paul and Hiltner are bound to have differences of opinion. And indeed, these differences do exist. Second, the places where the two men come together will be investigated. It is surprising that through approaching ministry from practically opposite perspectives, Paul and Hiltner have points of contact. Third, the complementary nature of the two approaches will be shown. Not only do Paul and Hiltner agree on several points regarding ministry, they are accessory to one another. When put together, their concepts of ministry form a whole greater than its parts. Their combined thoughts form a concept of ministry that is full of vitality.

The purpose of this dissertation is to propose a revitalized concept of ministry. Hopefully, this purpose will be attained by examining and integrating Paul and Seward Hiltner. But thus far, little has been said as to the value of proposing a revitalized concept of ministry.

In large part, the quest for a vital concept of ministry has been of personal value. The author has been plagued by his own weak and vague answers to the questions, "What is ministry?" and, "Who is



a minister?" What began as a search to better understand ministry has led the author to a revitalized concept of ministry.

Many Christians in this day have an inadequate understanding of ministry and its implications for Christian living. Hopefully the research and the conclusions of this dissertation will have an influence on this problem in the future.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PAULINE UNDERSTANDING OF MINISTRY

#### LIMITATIONS

The first task of this chapter on Paul is to state its limitations. One reason, already stated, for studying Paul is that his letters are the earliest books of the New Testament. Thus, Paul provides the earliest Christian usage of the Greek terms which are translated minister and ministry. But most scholars agree that not all of the letters attributed to Paul in the New Testament are genuine. They also agree that it is possible to separate the authentic letters of Paul from the inauthentic.<sup>1</sup> Generally speaking, the pseudonymous Pauline letters are so called because they are different from the genuine letters in style, theological development and emphasis, and ordering of the church. Excluding the exceptions of II Thessalonians, Colossians and Ephesians, the inauthentic letters are assigned with some confidence, dates later than the authentic letters. Though they are considered to be pseudonymous the dating of these three letters is unsure.<sup>2</sup> Since most of the pseudonymous epistles are not representative

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<sup>1</sup>Gunther Bornkamm, *Paul* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 242; see also Wayne A. Meeks (ed.) *The Writings of St. Paul* (New York: Norton, 1972), p. xi.

<sup>2</sup>Bornkamm, p. 242 and Meeks, pp. vii, 107, 121.

of the earliest Christian usage of the term ministry and because none of the modern scholars ascribe them to Paul, they will be excluded from this study of the Pauline understanding of ministry.

Those letters whose authenticity is not doubted are I Thessalonians, Galatians, I and II Corinthians, Philippians, Philemon, and Romans. Each of these letters is believed to have been written by Paul, and each is assigned a date previous to 62 A.D.<sup>3</sup>

. . . They are the oldest and, for the historian, the most trustworthy of all the earliest Christian writings; they are decades earlier than the Gospels which tell us of the life and preaching of Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

So it is to these ancient, authentic letters of Paul this study is limited. They present the earliest available concept of Christian ministry. The concept of ministry presented in them is that of Paul the Apostle.

There is another, thus far unmentioned, source for the life and thought of Paul. The source is the Book of Acts. More than half of this book is concerned with Paul the Apostle. Unfortunately, the Book of Acts was written in the post-apostolic age, "at the earliest toward the end of the first century, more than forty years after Paul's letters were written."<sup>5</sup> Hence, Acts is of little value in studying Paul's concept of ministry, for it must be understood as a document which reflects its own time and circumstance.

Another limitation of this study is in regard to terminology. "Minister" and "ministry" are the English translations of the Greek

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<sup>3</sup>Bornkamm, p. 242.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. xiv.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. xv.

words *Diakonos*, *Diakonia*, and *Diakoneō*. It is true that several other Greek terms are sometimes translated minister and ministry; this is particularly true of the King James Version and to a much lesser degree of the Revised Standard Version. But in both versions the fundamental terms translated "minister" and "ministry" are *Diakonos*, *Diakonia*, *Diakoneō*. With the exception of those places where it simply transliterates *Diakoneō* into deacon, the King James Version consistently translates every instance of *Diakonos*, *Diakonia*, *Diakoneō* in the New Testament with a form of the word minister. The Revised Standard Version is much more free than the King James Version in translating *Diakonia*.<sup>6</sup> The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament uses the terms minister (Col. 1:23), servant (Matt. 20:26), agent (Gal. 2:17), relief (2 Cor. 8:4), offering (2 Cor. 9:1), distribution (Acts 6:1), dispensation (2 Cor. 3:7), mission (Acts 12:25), provided (Luke 8:3), delivered (2 Cor. 3:3), employing (I Pet. 4:10), and deacons (Phil. 1:1), to translate the various forms of *Diakonia*. In the author's opinion the King James Version is too liberal in its use of the term minister.

By extending the usage of the term to Greek words other than *Diakonia*, the King James Version muddles the meaning of ministry as found in *Diakonia*. Though the Revised Standard Version corrects the tendency of over using the term ministry it goes to the opposite extreme. The Revised Standard Version is too free in its translating

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<sup>6</sup>Throughout the rest of the dissertation *Diakonia* will be used where *Diakonos*, *Diakonia*, *Diakoneō* are intended.

of *Diakonia*. By examining the various English translations in the Revised Standard Version, one begins to wonder if there is any root meaning to the word.

Throughout the rest of this dissertation all scripture will be quoted from the Revised Standard Version, except that wherever a form of *Diakonia* is used, a form of the word ministry will be inserted. In addition, after briefly examining the meaning of the forms of *Diakonia* in relation to other Greek words sometimes translated ministry, this study will be limited to Paul's use of *Diakonia*.

The pre-Christian use of *Diakonia* is important to understanding Paul's utilization of the term. In ancient secular Greek *Diakoneō* referred to waiting at table, tasting, directing a marriage feast, and providing or caring for another. As use of the term evolved it retained the concrete nature the above words suggest yet came to have the broader meaning, to serve.<sup>7</sup> "Fundamental to an understanding of *Diakoneō* in all its uses is the fact that it has an original concrete sense which is still echoed in its figurative meanings."<sup>8</sup> The forms *Diakonos* and *Diakonia* reflect the same development found in *Diakoneō*. In the religious realm there are few pre-Christian references to *Diakonia*. A few of the references which exist refer to *Diakonos* as an

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<sup>7</sup>Hermann W. Beyer, "διακονέω, διακονία, διακονος," in Gerhard Kittel (ed.) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), II, 82.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

assistant or acolyte to a priest.<sup>9</sup> Other references suggest the secular sense of the word.<sup>10</sup> Thus implying that in its religious use, *Diakonia* maintained its original concrete sense of service.

For the sake of getting a better grasp of *Diakonia* it is beneficial to contrast it with several other terms. Three Greek words which express the concept of serving will be used; they are *Leitourgos*, *Huperetes*, and *Doulos*. The first two words are translated minister by both the King James and Revised Standard Versions. Though *Doulos* is never translated minister, it is close in meaning to the other two terms.

*Leitourgos* underwent an evolution of meaning similar to *Diakonia*. Originally *Leitourgeō* had the concrete, technical meaning of rendering specific political services. In popular use the term evolved into the broader meaning, to serve. At the same time, in the religious realm *Leitourgeō* took on the technical sense of cultic priestly service. In both the Old and New Testaments, *Leitourgeō* denotes the cultic, priestly service of an individual.<sup>11</sup> In contrast to *Leitourgos*, *Diakonia* does not have the same kind of specificity. In pre-Christian usage *Diakonia* is a general term for service, specific only in the sense that the service rendered is concrete and functional.

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<sup>9</sup>Richard T. Nolan (ed.) *The Diaconate Now* (Washington, Cleveland: Corpus Books, 1968), p. 12.

<sup>10</sup>Beyer, II, 83.

<sup>11</sup>H. Strathmann and R. Meyer, "λειτουργέω . . ." in Kittel, IV, 215-231.

*Diakonia* would be inclusive of the cultic, priestly service denoted by *Leitourgos* as well as other secular types of service.

*Huperetes* is another word that has been translated minister in the New Testament. In the same manner as *Leitourgos*, *Huperetes* is more particular in its application than *Diakonia*. But the secular and religious meanings of *Huperetes* are the same. The noun *Huperetes* "is always used in a general sense similar to that of classical and Hellenistic Greek . . . 'assistant to another as the instrument of his will.'"<sup>12</sup> The emphasis of *Huperetes* is serving in the place of another whose will determines the character of the service to be performed. *Huperetes* is frequently translated attendant (Luke 4:20) or adjutant.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, *Diakonia* indicates personal, willful service. In *Diakoneō* "there is a stronger approximation to the concept of a service of love."<sup>14</sup>

The last word to be examined in relation to *Diakonia* is *Doulos*. *Doulos* is similar to *Diakonia* in that the character of the service can be broadly defined. In the New Testament *Doulos* is used in both secular (Col. 4:1) and religious (Tit. 1:1) senses. But in contrast to *Diakonia*, *Leitourgos* and *Huperetes*, *Doulos* means to serve as a slave. The emphasis of the term is upon subjection and bondage. A *Doulos* is one whose service is marked by enslavement.<sup>15</sup> Whereas

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<sup>12</sup>Beyer, II, 81.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, "δοῦλος . . ." in Kittel, II, 261.

*Doulos* stresses the involuntary nature of servitude, *Diakonia* emphasizes the voluntary nature of service.

In the last few paragraphs the pre-Christian usage of *Diakonia* has been examined. It has been contrasted to three other Greek words found in the New Testament which express the concept of serving. *Diakonia* has been shown to be a term possessing a distinct character of its own. The distinctive character of *Diakonia* is that which forms the basis of Paul's concept of ministry. The rest of this chapter will examine Paul's use of *Diakonia* and his resultant concept of ministry.

#### PAUL'S CONCEPT OF MINISTRY

Paul's perspective of ministry is entirely different from that of today's churchman. Contemporary churchmen interpret ministry and its meaning through the veil of centuries of tradition. For contemporary churchmen the word minister almost automatically triggers an image of church officials and the offices of the church; the word ministry is practically synonymous with the activities of the church. When Paul wrote the word *Diakonia*, he was using a term rarely spoken in religious settings. The term *Diakonia* had no official usage in Judaism; it was basically a secular term. Paul, in his authentic letters, shows no interest in starting or developing an official Christian ministry. Bishops, elders and deacons are not a part of his usual vocabulary. In fact, Philippians 1:1 "is the only place in Paul's writings apart from the doubtful pastoral epistles, where these officials are



mentioned."<sup>16</sup> Even this reference to officials may be an interpolation of the text. Hence, if one is to adequately understand Paul's concept of ministry several latter-day suppositions concerning ministry must be suspended.

Whether Jesus, or one of the early church leaders prior to Paul used *Diakonia* to describe a Christian concept is unknown. Known is the fact, that Paul described one facet of his Christian faith with the word *Diakonia*. By examining his use of *Diakonia* one can discover an emerging concept in Paul's thought. This emerging concept is never fully systematized or articulated in any one place. Yet it does give birth to practical application in Paul's life and teaching. The varieties of ministry develop as functional manifestations of Paul's underlying concept of ministry. Through studying the genuine letters of Paul one can glean several characteristics of his concept of *Diakonia*. These characteristics will now be discussed.

The descriptive value of *Diakonia* is important to Paul's concept of ministry. From a number of Greek words which are of similar meaning Paul consistently chooses *Diakonia* to describe his feelings about serving. There are three distinct ways in which Paul capitalizes the descriptive value of *Diakonia*. First, *Diakonia* usually refers to activity done by someone of low position. Second, *Diakonia* is broad

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<sup>16</sup>Ernest F. Scott, "Introduction and Exegesis, The Epistle to the Philippians," in *The Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), XI, 16.

in application, yet functional in a specific setting. Third, *Diakonia* is always voluntary service. These descriptive qualities will be discussed in order.

Generally, in pre-Christian Greek thought servanthood is to be avoided.

In Greek eyes serving is not very dignified. Ruling and not serving is proper to a man, Plat. Gorg., 492b. The formula of the sophist: 'How can a man be happy when he has to serve someone?' expresses the basic Greek attitude (Plat. Gorg., 491e).<sup>17</sup>

Service to the state was the one clear contradiction to this attitude. An individual could serve the state and keep his dignity. But service to the state was dignified only because in a real sense it was self service.

Paul takes advantage of the low estimation of *Diakonia*. In I Corinthians 3:5, he asks, "What then is Apol'los [sic]? What is Paul? Ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each." In this passage Paul is clearly using *Diakonoi* to minimize the activity of Apollos and himself. They are merely ministers of a task which was assigned them. In verse 7, Paul argues that neither Apollos nor himself "is anything, but only God who gives the growth." A central reason *Diakonoi* is used here is because it describes a position of lowliness and humility.

Another passage from Paul which emphasizes the humble nature of *Diakonia* is II Corinthians 3:3. Speaking to the church, Paul says, "and you show that you are a letter from Christ ministered by us,

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<sup>17</sup>Beyer, II, 82.

written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God." Here the implication is that "the Corinthian Christians are a letter of which Christ is the author and Paul is the scribe."<sup>18</sup> Paul's position is important but still it is secondary. As one who ministers, his task is humble and lowly in comparison with the author who is Christ.

In both of the above scripture passages, ministry is described as the humble exercise of service. *Diakonia* is performed with the awareness that God and Christ are the masters, and the minister's role is secondary. God is the one who gives growth; Christ is the author; and Paul carries out the humble yet important task of ministry.

According to Paul *Diakonia* can be used to express a broad spectrum of tasks and includes the activities of many different people. Not only are Paul and Apollos minister, so are Timothy (I Thess. 3:2), Onesimus the slave (Phil. 13), the household of Stephanas (I Cor. 16:15), Moses (II Cor. 3:7), and Christ (Rom. 15:8). Ministry is not limited to one kind of person or to one kind of task. Paul says "there are varieties of ministry but the same Lord." Even though Paul uses *Diakonia* in the sense of its wide scope, he holds this tendency in tension with the term's concrete nature. Paul consistently uses *Diakonia* in relation to specific functions. *Diakonia* rarely stands in a sentence or paragraph without other words modifying it. A *Diakonos* is one who has some kind of task to perform. In I Corinthians

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<sup>18</sup>James L. Price, "The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians," in *The Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 815.

3:6, Paul planted and Apollos watered. In II Corinthians 3:3, Paul performs the function of a scribe. Paul invites the Corinthian Christians to join in the ministry to the saints (II Cor. 8:1-9:12), which was an offering collected for the church in Jerusalem. Each of these examples illustrate the concrete manner in which *Diakonia* is used.

The voluntary nature of *Diakonia* is the third descriptive quality Paul emphasizes. Galatians 2:17, asks the question "is Christ then a minister of sin?" Paul is not suggesting that Christ could be in bondage or even subject to sin. He is asking if Christ could be "one who furthers the interests of sin, promotes, encourages it."<sup>19</sup> This is an example of a subtle way in which the voluntary aspect of *Diakonia* affects the meaning of a phrase. A far less subtle example of the voluntary nature of *Diakonia* can be seen in II Corinthians 8:1-9:12. In this passage Paul coaxes the Corinthians to share in the ministry to the saints. Coaxing would not be necessary if ministry did not involve choice.

The descriptive value of *Diakonia* plays an important role in Paul's concept of ministry. In each of Paul's references to *Diakonia* one or more of its descriptive characteristics influence the meaning of the text. But Paul's concept of ministry is not simply mundane. In Paul's thinking, *Diakonia* takes on cosmological proportions (II Cor. 11:15; I Thess. 3:2). The relation of ministry to the universe, is the factor which determines the important place servanthood holds

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<sup>19</sup>Ernest De Witt Burton, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1921), p. 126.

in his thought.

Paul's cosmological thinking is shaped by his acceptance of an eschatological dualism. This form of dualism is partially the fusion of a Jewish past with Gnostic tendencies.<sup>20</sup> The cosmic powers are divided into two camps: God and Satan. Though God has created the world and the activity of the evil powers are restricted by him, "there is an area of the creation in which rebellious powers, at enmity with God and man, hold sway."<sup>21</sup> Paul goes so far as to call Satan "the god of this world" (II Cor. 4:4).

Thus, the creation has a peculiarly ambiguous character: on the one hand, it is the earth placed by God at man's disposal for his use and benefit . . . ; on the other, it is the field of activity for evil, demonic powers.<sup>22</sup>

Eschatology impinges on the Pauline dualism in two different ways. First, Paul's dualism is characterized by the temporal dimensions of "this age" and "the age to come." He frequently talks about "this age" (Rom. 12:2; I Cor. 1:20, 2:6; II Cor. 4:4).

. . . while the corresponding phrase 'the coming age' is never used by Paul himself (but see Eph. 1:21), the contrast between 'this age' and 'the age to come' is nevertheless implicit, particularly when he contrasts 'things present' with the 'things to come' (Rom. 8:38; I Cor. 3:22).<sup>23</sup>

The present age is characterized by transitoriness (I Cor. 7:31),

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<sup>20</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), I, 173.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 230.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Victor P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), p. 115.

suffering (Rom. 8:18), and pervasive evil (Gal. 1:4). The present age is held captive by Satan and his associates.<sup>24</sup> But Paul also believes the rulers of this age are "doomed to pass away" (I Cor. 2:6). In the end, the forces of Satan will not be able to stop the purposes of God (Rom. 8:38). Still, God's victory over Satan is not to be seen in the present age.

The power of God is not, . . . a this-worldly power, but is transcendent of this age and will have its full effect only in the age to come when the present powers are finally subdued and abolished.<sup>25</sup>

There is a second manner Paul's eschatology encroaches upon his dualism. It is the salvation-occurrence of Jesus Christ. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, God has set in motion the process by which the present age will come to an end. "The salvation-occurrence is the eschatological occurrence which puts to end the old aeon."<sup>26</sup> With the sending of Christ, the new age becomes so decisive a reality that Paul says "the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (II Cor. 5:17). Yet the new age is not fully present until the parousia of Christ and the cosmic drama that will signal the end of the old age (I Thess. 4:16; I Cor. 15:23).<sup>27</sup>

The salvation-occurrence brings new hope for mankind. Before the saving event men were in bondage to the power of sin (Rom. 6:17). There was no avenue of escape from evil. Some thought the law provided this avenue. Though Paul denies that the law is sinful (Rom. 7:7) he

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<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>26</sup>Bultmann, I, 306.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

argues the law made matters worse for mankind by bringing them knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20, 7:7-11). Because the Christ event has occurred, persons have the opportunity to participate in the new age. No longer must they remain the slaves of sin, they can become the slaves of righteousness (Rom. 6:18). No longer need people walk according to the flesh, they can walk according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:4). The condition of persons has changed; they now have a choice.

By virtue of the essential nature of Paul's dualism people's alternatives are limited. One limitation is that they cannot opt to serve neither God nor Satan. The implicit demand of dualism requires that people serve one or the other; there is no third or neutral ground. Another limitation is that persons cannot perfectly serve either Satan or God. The Christian cannot perfectly serve God because he still lives "in the world" and "in the flesh."

A Christian's existence is not magically transformed but even after he becomes a Christian his life continues to be an historical existence as long as he is 'in the flesh.' His existence is ever threatened by danger; and if he, too, must still suffer under the enmity of those 'powers,' what is expressed in such statements is nothing else than the state of constant threat that menaces his existence.<sup>28</sup>

Man cannot perfectly serve Satan because eventually God's purposes will win victory over Satan (Rom. 8:38). Man cannot escape from the fact that he is the imperfect servant of either God or Satan.

Whereas at one time people had no choice as to whom they would serve, the choice is now a reality. At one time they were in bondage

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<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 258.

to sin. After the salvation-occurrence persons could conceivably be subjects of sin, but never captives. In Romans 6:22, Paul, speaking to Christians, writes, "you have been set free from sin and have become slaves (*Douloi*) of God." They have been set free from sin through Christ; nevermore will they be the slaves of sin. In this instance Paul's use of the word slave emphasizes subjecthood rather than bondage. One is freed from sin by choosing to become a slave of God. Being subject to either God or Satan is unavoidable, but to which of these powers one is subjected is a voluntary matter.

*Diakonia* is the word Paul most frequently chooses to describe the voluntary servanthood of man. All persons are *Diakono*i of one power or another. One can be a minister of Satan (II Cor. 11:15), or a minister of God (I Thess. 3:2). Paul claims to be a minister of Christ (II Cor. 11:23); and of course he who belongs to Christ also belongs to God (I Cor. 3:23).

Because of its relation to the struggle of the forces of the universe, ministry is a vitally important concern of all people. While people live out their lives on earth, they are participating in the battle between the present age and the age to come. Through their earthly activities they serve either God or Satan, either life or death. Rudolf Bultmann has noted that Paul's theology is not speculative.

It deals with God not as He is in Himself but only with God as He is significant for man, for man's responsibility and man's salvation. Correspondingly, it does not deal with the world and man as they are in themselves, but constantly sees the world and man in their relation to God.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 191.



Consequently, the ministry of God or Satan takes place through the ministry of persons. The way one ministers other persons determines whether God or Satan is being served. Through the concrete action of serving, the individual proves whose servant he is. While exhorting the Corinthians to add to the collection for Jerusalem in II Corinthians 9, Paul writes, "Under the test of this ministry you will glorify God" (II Cor. 9:13). "This 'ministry' in the collection is a 'test' that, rightly passed, will give 'proof' that the Corinthians sincerely believe and follow the gospel."<sup>30</sup>

In his writings Paul assumes that everyone would rather be a minister of God than a minister of Satan. Thus, most of the Pauline references to *Diakonia* are positive, and assume that *Diakonia* is a good activity rather than a Demonic one. In most instances Paul operates under the belief that everyone knows ministry is personal, beneficial, loving service. Since He feels no need to go into a detailed characterization of Christian ministry, he never does.

Having examined servanthood in the light of Paul's eschatological dualism, it becomes apparent that *Diakonia* represents a functional role. Christians are supposed to function in the world in the role of the *Diakonoi* of God. The role is not limited to any particular group of Christians; all are called to be ministers of God. Christians function in the role of the *Diakonoi* of God when they actively seek to minister unto the world around them through concrete means. The

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<sup>30</sup> John Knox, "Introduction and Exegesis, The Epistle to the Romans," in *The Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), X, 379.

functional role of ministry combines the cosmological and descriptive characteristics of *Diakonia*.

Paul combines the characteristics of *Diakonia* in the following manner. For him the descriptive character of *Diakonia* suggests lowly, humble service. Concurrently, the cosmological importance of ministry suggests an exalted task. Paul holds these two evaluations of *Diakonia* in tension as he writes concerning the functional role of ministry.

II Corinthians 3:3-9 provides the best example of this tension. In this passage Paul discusses ministry in general and his own ministry in particular. The text follows:

and you show that you are a letter from Christ ministered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our sufficiency is from God, who has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit; for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Now if the ministration of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such splendor that the Israelites could not look at Moses' face because of its brightness, fading as this was, will not the ministration of the Spirit be attended with greater splendor? For if there was splendor in the ministration of condemnation, the ministration of righteousness must far exceed it in splendor.

Significantly, Paul uses a form of *Diakonia* six times in six verses.

The tone of the first four verses is one of confidence and humility.

In verse 3, Paul claims the humble role of being one who ministers (delivers or enscribes) a letter written by Christ. In verses 4 and 5, Paul emphasizes that he is not confident regarding the quality of the letter being sent because of his role. His confidence is not in himself. He is confident because God has made him sufficient and

qualified him to be a minister. Paul's ministry is humble and he is humble in regard to his ministry. But as Paul continues in the last three verses of the passage he speaks of the splendor of ministry. When Moses brought the tablets of stone before the Israelites he was actually involved in the activity of ministering death. Still Moses' ministry was attended with a splendor. Therefore, Paul asserts, it only makes sense that the act of ministering righteousness is even more splendid than Moses' ministry. Christian ministry is both humble and splendid.

The functional role of ministry is simultaneously concrete and cosmological. Both elements are present in every instance of ministry. In II Corinthians 11:23, Paul claims to be a better servant of Christ than those he calls the "superlative apostles" (I Cor. 11:5). He justifies his claim by asserting he has "far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death" (II Cor. 11:23). The cosmological role of being a *Diakonos* of Christ always implicates the concrete activity of earthly action. Another illustration of this duality is found in I Corinthians 12:5, where Paul writes, "there are varieties of ministry but the same Lord." The concrete aspect of *Diakonia* is exemplified through the varieties of form it takes. On the other hand, the varieties of ministry are united under the cosmological cause of ministry to "the same Lord."

The functional role of ministry is both voluntary and involuntary. These characteristics coexist in all ministry. The individual has the ability to choose whom he will serve, yet subjecthood is

unavoidable. If one voluntarily chooses to serve God, that decision demands earthly service which reflects the decision made. Conversely, it is true that the type of earthly service one renders to others will determine which cosmological power is being served. II Corinthians 9:13, provides an example of the voluntary and the involuntary nature of ministry. In this passage Paul is persuading the church to participate in the collection for Jerusalem.

Under the test of this ministry, you will glorify God by your obedience in acknowledging the gospel of Christ, and by the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others;

The collection is a voluntary service. Nowhere does Paul command or demand that anyone participate in it. But in this passage Paul clearly states the result of participating in the collection will be glorifying God. If one chooses to help with the offering the inevitable result will be to glorify God. Looking at the text from a different perspective one can see how Paul is exerting pressure on the Corinthians to join in the collection. Paul indicates that if one chooses to glorify God, one must necessarily do so through obedience of the gospel of Christ and generously contributing to others. Thus, the collection is a test of how sincere the Corinthians are in their ministry of God.

The Pauline concept of ministry is not fully systematized nor can it be completely exposed through examining his letters. Still, through studying Paul's writings a rudimentary understanding of his concept of ministry can be grasped. Fundamentally, the concept appears in Paul as a combining of the descriptive qualities of *Diakonia* and an eschatological dualism. This combination forms the basis for a concept

which must be understood in the setting of the functional role of ministry. Ministry has cosmological implications, yet it only occurs in the cosmos when it occurs on earth in specific settings, through specific activities. Where *Diakonia* exists as a functional role it is always humble but exalted, concrete but cosmic, voluntary but involuntary.

### THE FORMS OF MINISTRY

Paul's concept of ministry dictates the manifestation of ministry in particular forms. The phrase "functional role of ministry" is an attempt to speak to this point in a conceptual manner. Yet it speaks in a conceptual manner about something which Paul treats very concretely. Most of the Pauline references to *Diakonia* are specific and concrete rather than speculative. Several observations can be made about the specific forms of ministry Paul mentions.

At no point in the undoubted letters of Paul does he make an official list of ministries or ministers. The closest Paul comes to this is found in I Corinthians 12:28 where he lists the "gifts." There is no hierarchy or order of ministry in Paul's letters. "The churches of Paul as seen in his letters show no sign of a fixed and imposed order. There are leaders, but they fall into no pattern."<sup>31</sup> In one instance Paul subordinates the so-called office of apostle to *Diakonia* (Rom. 11:13), but in another instance he adds *Diakonia* to a

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<sup>31</sup> Floyd V. Filson, *A New Testament History* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), p. 346.

list of gifts which include prophecy, teaching, exhorting, contributing, and mercy (Rom. 12:7). "*Diakonia* was used either generally of all Christian ministrations . . . or specially of the administration of alms and attendance to bodily wants."<sup>32</sup>

In Paul's day, as in contemporary times, some persons were more notable examples of ministry than others. Thus, *Diakonos* is more frequently attached to these people in Paul's writings. In I Thessalonians 3:2, Timothy is called a "minister of God." In Romans 13:4, Paul cites the ruler as a "minister of God." Paul frequently calls himself a minister (I Cor. 3:5; II Cor. 3:6, 6:4). In I Corinthians 16:15, he says the household of Stephanas has devoted itself to the ministry of the saints. In none of these cases is there any indication of an office of ministry. Still it is noteworthy that the word *Diakonos* tends to be employed in reference to outstanding individuals.

Perhaps the seeds of an "official" ministry may be planted through Paul's use of the term. This possibility sounds more probable when one considers the way Paul talks about the household of Stephanas in I Corinthians 16:15-18. Here Paul urges the Corinthians "to be subject to such men," and "to give recognition to such men." Paul is not telling the people to give these men a special status or position in the church. He is telling the people to emulate the example of these men. But the tendency toward church offices is suggested by the passage.

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<sup>32</sup>William Sanday and A. Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1911), XI, 357.

The "varieties of ministry" are many in Paul's thought. Paul never enumerates all the possible forms of ministry. Considering his concept of ministry such an attempt would be practically impossible. All activity is one kind of service or another. The forms of ministry Paul talks about are those present in the Christian community in his time. Their presence is a response to the spiritual and physical needs felt by the Christians.

There is one particular form of *Diakonia* which Paul frequently mentions. This ministry is the collection for Jerusalem. In reference to the collection, Paul uses a phrase which becomes "almost a technical expression."<sup>33</sup> Through its constant use, the phrase almost takes on the aura of the official. The phrase is "ministry to the saints." It occurs in II Corinthians 8:4; 9:1; slight variations are in Romans 15:25, and I Corinthians 16:15. Other references to the collection as a ministry are II Corinthians 8:19, 20; 9:1, 13. Even if the "ministry to the saints" has the aura of being official, the phrase shows no hint of referring to an elite group of officials. The ministry to the saints is open to all who wish to participate. Paul spends no little amount of time encouraging and persuading the Corinthians to participate wholeheartedly (I Cor. 15:15; II Cor. 8:4-9:12). It is doubtful that the collection for Jerusalem was an enduring form of ministry. New Testament "evidence suggests rather that Paul's collection was a one-time emergency fund for relief of those who were literally 'poor

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<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

among the saints in Jerusalem'" (Rom. 15:26).<sup>34</sup>

The collection for Jerusalem provides a good example of the way Paul talks about the forms of ministry. Concurrently it illustrates the relationship between Paul's concept of ministry and the forms which emerge from that concept. Paul is asking the churches to give money for the saints in Jerusalem. This is what Paul typically calls ministry to the saints. But there is another form of ministry to the saints taking place in regard to the collection for Jerusalem. The collection is "being ministered" by Paul and his associates (II Cor. 8:19, 20). The organizing, promoting, collecting and delivering of the collection are forms of ministry taken care of by a small group including Paul. Hence, several forms of ministry are set beside each other under the title of "the ministry to the saints." Their activities are different, but the concept behind their actions is the same.

#### SUMMARY

This has been a chapter on the Pauline understanding of ministry. In order to accomplish the task of understanding Paul's concept of ministry, two fundamental limitations were stated. First, the chapter was limited to the seven authentic letters of Paul. The seven undoubted letters of Paul are I Thessalonians, Galatians, I and II Corinthians, Philippians, Philemon, and Romans. Second, the study was limited to Paul's use of the term *Diakonia*. Though there are several Greek words

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<sup>34</sup>Meeks, p. 15.



used by Paul to denote service, *Diakonia* is the basic term from which his concept of ministry evolves. Prior to Paul *Diakonia* was fundamentally a secular term denoting concrete acts of service such as waiting at table. As opposed to the other Greek terms for service, *Diakonia* represented personal, loving service.

Paul's concept of ministry is best understood as a combining of the descriptive character of *Diakonia* and an eschatological dualism. Paul, in his writings, shows an awareness of three descriptive features of *Diakonia*. *Diakonia* is humble, concrete, voluntary service. Paul's cosmic perspective suggests people have a choice between serving God or Satan, but he must serve one or the other. This choice was made available through the salvation-occurrence of Jesus Christ. The cosmic powers are served through concrete activities on earth. Hence, if one chooses to serve man in a manner obedient to the Gospel he will inevitably serve God. One who serves God is performing an exalted task. The descriptive and dualistic features of *Diakonia* come together in Paul's writing as a functional role. As a functional role, ministry is simultaneously humble and exalted, concrete and cosmic, voluntary and involuntary.

"Functional role" is a phrase which speaks in a conceptual way about the forms of ministry. But the forms of ministry appear in a specific manner in Paul's letters. Several observations were made regarding the forms of ministry as they present themselves in the letters. One observation is that there appears no hierarchy or ordering of ministry in Paul's letters. Ministry is a general term rooted

in concrete specificity. Another observation was the tendency of the early Christian leadership to be associated with the word *Diakonos*. Paul frequently calls outstanding individuals ministers. A further observation was made concerning the "varieties of ministries." Paul does not personally list the various forms of ministry, his concept of ministry would imply an endless list. The forms of ministry Paul writes about are not meant to be permanent. The most frequently mentioned form of ministry in Paul is the "ministry to the saints." This service was an emergency relief fund for the poor in the church in Jerusalem.

Paul never indulges in lengthy speculation in his letters concerning his concept of ministry. Throughout his authentic letters, Paul's concept of ministry is an underlying presence. For brief moments, such as can be found in II Corinthians 3:2-9, the concept surfaces in Paul's mind for speculation. But the term *Diakonia* is most comfortable in concrete settings, and this is where the term is most frequently found in Paul. For Paul, ministry is an earthly activity of cosmic significance.

## CHAPTER III

### SEWARD HILTNER'S FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF MINISTRY

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this chapter is to elucidate Seward Hiltner's functional and theological concept of ministry as made manifest in his book, *Preface to Pastoral Theology*. By a great margin, most of Hiltner's published books and articles have centered on pastoral counseling and pastoral psychology. His main concern in these works has been the relationship of the professional Christian minister to the fields of psychology and counseling.<sup>1</sup> Hiltner's most frequent publisher of his articles has been the periodical, *Pastoral Psychology*, wherein he has spoken on such topics as "Divorced Ministers," "Theological Education in Holland," and "Ministerial Money on Mars."<sup>2</sup> Most certainly, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* was spawned with the same fundamental concerns as found in the rest of his published works. Yet, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* transcends Hiltner's predilection for speaking to the relationship of the pastor to psychology and counseling in a manner not

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<sup>1</sup>Seward Hiltner, *The Christian Shepherd* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959); see also Seward Hiltner, *The Counselor in Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952); and Seward Hiltner, *Pastoral Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949).

<sup>2</sup>For a complete list through 1967, see "Bibliography of Seward Hiltner," *Pastoral Psychology*, XIX (January 1968), 6-22.

found in any other of his writings. In this book Hiltner seeks to present an adequate theoretical framework through which the feasibility and importance of developing a rigorous pastoral theology can be viewed. While seeking to improve the state of pastoral theology, Seward Hiltner performs another, broader and more important task. He proposes a model for doing theology.

The theoretical framework Hiltner presents rests on a model he proposes for organizing theological knowledge and study. The character of Hiltner's model for organizing theological knowledge shows the influence of his former colleagues at the University of Chicago. Hiltner upholds the "application of the empirical principle in theology"<sup>3</sup> characteristic of the Chicago school. He seeks to combine the functional and scientific fields with the more traditional theological fields.

. . . Hiltner clearly belongs to the more dialectical group along with Hartshorne and Williams, as distinguished from the more thoroughgoing empiricism of Wieman and Meland. Nevertheless the basis for this kind of thinking as a whole is what made possible the rather easy juxtaposing of scientific, pastoral, and theological materials in *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, a juxtaposition still baffling and somewhat disturbing to those schooled in traditions where religion is one thing and science is another.<sup>4</sup>

Seward Hiltner's model for organizing theological knowledge contains two major subdivisions. These subdivisions form the fundamental avenues through which theology can be studied. Under one

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<sup>3</sup>James N. Lapsley, "Pastoral Theology Past and Present," in William B. Oglesby, Jr., (ed.) *The New Shape of Pastoral Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), p. 39.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

subdivision Hiltner lists the disciplines traditionally regarded to have theological implications. Here he includes Bible, history of Christianity, doctrine, ethics, personality, humanities, and history of religions. Hiltner does not claim this list is complete. The disciplines he has listed contribute respectively to biblical theology, historical theology, doctrinal theology, moral theology, psychological theology, aesthetical theology, and comparative theology.<sup>5</sup> As a whole they comprise what Hiltner calls the "logic-centered fields." Hiltner uses the term, logic-centered in reference to these disciplines "to suggest that the key to their distinctive nature lies in a 'logical' organization of subject matter."<sup>6</sup> The logic-centered fields of theology have an obvious logical relationship to theology; they seem almost indispensable to its study. The developments which emerge from the study of these fields do so on a logical basis.

The study of the Bible, or biblical theology, is centered logically around anything that contributes to understanding the meaning, development and significance of that book and the people and events and experiences lying behind the book. The study of doctrine is organized systematically and logically around the relation of doctrines to one another and their mutually reinforcing capacity to give testimony to the total faith.<sup>7</sup>

According to Seward Hiltner, those disciplines whose internal organization is logic-centered have historically been the only ones considered

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<sup>5</sup>Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 28.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 218, n. 12.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 21.

capable of serious theological contributions. But Hiltner suggests that the logic-centered disciplines entail only one of two subdivisions in the body of divinity.

The "operation-centered areas" form the second major subdivision in Hiltner's organization of theological knowledge and study.

Within the whole body of divinity what is distinctive about the operation-centered inquiries . . . is that their theological conclusions, or theory or basic principles, emerge from reflection primarily on acts or events or functions from a particular perspective.<sup>8</sup>

While the central focus of the logic-centered fields is logical, the central focus of the operation-centered areas is operational or functional. The operation-centered areas are organized and developed functionally. In the same manner as logic-centered theologizing takes place from a perspective such as Bible or doctrine, operation-centered theologizing is done from one of several functional perspectives.

The functional perspectives as a whole comprise what Hiltner calls "the functions of church and minister."<sup>9</sup> Traditionally, the functions of church and minister have been organized into the offices of worship, preaching, Christian education, pastoral care, evangelism, missions, social outreach and church administration.<sup>10</sup> But Hiltner rejects this system of offices because it does not adequately isolate the essential qualities of ministry. He uses as an example the office of preaching.

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<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 216, n. 8.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28.

Here is a particular minister on a particular Sunday morning preaching a particular sermon to a particular group of people. If we are using the scheme of offices, we simply classify this event as preaching. But some members of the congregation may say the sermon was instructive and mean it literally. To others it brought a solicitous concern easing their burden. Calling this whole event 'preaching,' therefore, does not deal exhaustively with its meaning and significance.<sup>11</sup>

After reflecting on the traditional organization of ministries, Hiltner proposed they be reorganized into functional units that are more consistent with emerging theory and theological tradition. In place of the offices of ministry, Hiltner suggests his functional perspectives of ministry. His purpose is to make ministry dynamic and empirical.

Hiltner believes there are three fundamental and essential perspectives in the operation-centered branch of theology; they are shepherding, communicating, and organizing.<sup>12</sup> These three perspectives are present in all acts of ministry. One perspective may dominate a particular act of ministry, yet the other perspectives will also be present.<sup>13</sup> Hiltner maintains the three operation-centered perspectives lead respectively to pastoral theology, educational and evangelistic theology, and ecclesiastical theology. But more important for this dissertation is that the three operation-centered perspectives constitute the essential aspects of Christian ministry. As a unit they give form to Seward Hiltner's functional understanding of ministry.

Seward Hiltner's understanding of ministry is heavily influenced by his perception of the church and its professional leadership.

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<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 60.

As presented in *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, the scope of ministry is represented by the traditional offices of ministry. Hiltner is not calling for new forms of ministry or suggesting that the traditional offices are inadequate in terms of scope. He is indicating that the offices of ministry are not the essential qualities of ministry; they only exemplify them. There are essential qualities of ministry that deal more adequately with basic theory than the offices of ministry.

Hiltner is proposing that ministry is a major subdivision in the body of divinity. The Christian life is as important to theology as the Christian faith.<sup>14</sup> In order to pave the way for deeper theological insights, Hiltner proposes a new way of organizing ministry so that it may more adequately reflect its essential qualities. Hiltner's three functional perspectives of ministry comprise his proposal for a means of organizing ministry that deals more adequately with basic theory than the offices of ministry.

Seward Hiltner's functional perspectives of ministry must be understood in the light of the scientific model known as field theory. Hiltner has chosen this model for its ability to explain the relationship between the three operation-centered perspectives. As has already been mentioned, Hiltner holds there are three distinct perspectives of ministry, yet to some degree all three functions are present in any given act of ministry.

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<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28.



. . . a way must be found for considering functions that does not first put them in pigeon-holes and then later say there are no pigeon-holes. There must be a way of viewing the relationships among functions that does not involve categorical separation and yet which does provide focus and clarity on any act or function.<sup>15</sup>

Hiltner believes he has found a solution in field theory. He illustrates field theory by speaking about a magnet and iron filings. The force field of a magnet influences the position of iron filings in proximity to it. The iron filings will tend to converge at two points of the magnet, yet the force of the magnet will affect the filings in a field around itself. There is a focal point for the force; yet its influence extends beyond any single location. The center of the force is known as the "focus"; the entire area of influence is called the "field."

The focus is the point or points at which influence is greatest. The field, for practical purposes, may extend but a short distance, but theoretically its extension is indefinite. Thus the place within the field, relative to the focus, becomes the important question--not the misleading question as to whether there is or is not influence. A categorical yes or no is seen to be irrelevant to the problem.<sup>16</sup>

There are some further implications of field theory. One is that the focus can only be observed in its relation to the rest of the field. The focal point is a part of the field, and is separate from the rest of the field only in terms relative to the degree of force exerted on it. Another implication of field theory is that the field

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<sup>15</sup>Seward Hiltner, "Implications for the Ministry of the Dialogue Between Doctrine and Experience," in *Association of Seminary Professors in the Practical Fields: Report of the Sixth Through Tenth Biennial Meetings, 1960-1968*, p. 75.

<sup>16</sup>Hiltner, *Preface*, p. 57.

is directed toward the focal point, and everything in the field maintains a relation to the focus.<sup>17</sup>

Hiltner applies field theory to the entire body of divinity. When Hiltner refers to the subdivisions in the body of divinity he is not speaking of independent, isolated categories. The logic-centered fields are centered on logic but are not exclusively logical. At one point in *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, Hiltner uses the phrase "Function-focused fields" as a synonym for the operation-centered fields.<sup>18</sup> Making direct application to field theory, the body of divinity is the field and the two focal points of the field are the logic-centered areas and the operation-centered areas. Both focal points are always a part of the general field, even when observation is concentrated on one of them over the other. The logic-centered areas will always be influenced to some degree by the function-centered areas and vice versa.

The three perspectives of the operation-centered branch of theology relate to one another as focal points in a general field. Every act of ministry contains all three perspectives, but only one or two of them will usually be the focus of a given act of ministry. None of the perspectives are entirely independent of the others. In order to clearly visualize which perspective is dominant at a given moment, one must be able to see the field to which the focal point is relative. Each of the perspectives are an essential part of the general field

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<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 23.

which is the operation-centered branch of theology.

Each perspective of the function-focused fields is a general field with focal points. For example, Hiltner says the focal point of the perspective called "communicating," is the "saving truth." "Yet even though this is its focus, it can hardly be the entire area covered by the communicating perspective."<sup>19</sup> The communicating perspective is a field rather than a static category.

Hiltner's use of field theory permeates the entire structure of his model for organizing theological knowledge and study. Hiltner uses field theory as a tool through which to express the fluidity and complexity of his theological model.

The rest of this chapter will be concerned with Seward Hiltner's functional perspectives of ministry. But before examining the perspectives in closer detail, Hiltner's use of the word "perspective" needs to be discussed. Hiltner does not choose this word arbitrarily; he uses it as a technical term.

The term 'perspective' suggests that there is a certain point of view in the subject who is performing the viewing or feeling or helping. But it implies also that this subject is not completely described by this slant or point of view.<sup>20</sup>

A perspective is one viewpoint among other potential viewpoints. It is one way of looking at things. "Perspective" is also a relational term, implying both a subject and an object. There is one who has a perspective, or point of view, and "the point of view is directed somewhere

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<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 18.

in particular, in act, in feeling, in attitude."<sup>21</sup> There is also an air of permanence about perspectives. One is never without some perspective. Hence, the word "perspective" fits in well with Hiltner's general scheme.

By using the term "perspective" in reference to the three essential qualities of ministry, Hiltner emphasizes their functional character. They are relational qualities rather than isolated categories. They are viewpoints from which activities take place. Each of the perspectives of ministry represent one among several viewpoints through which activity takes place. Each of the three is a perspective; and at least one of them is the focal point in every act of ministry.

The three operation-centered perspectives are shepherding, communicating, and organizing. In each case, Hiltner has used the present participle form of the word rather than the noun form.

This is to show that the perspectives they define are active and in process. This should help us keep in mind that such branches of theology do not merely examine bodies of subject matter already drawn from observation, but also are constantly engaged in such investigation.<sup>22</sup>

The three perspectives represent the on-going process of ministry. As it relates to theology, ministry is not just an activity of the past to be studied as historical event. It is an activity in the present, providing fresh material for theological investigation. Each of the perspectives provides a unique viewpoint through which theology can

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<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 55.

and should take place.

Hiltner succinctly defines shepherding as "the exercise of tender and solicitous care."<sup>23</sup> He recognizes this as a biblical metaphor that should not be lost. But as one of the three essential qualities of ministry, shepherding is more than just an activity.

The view of shepherding as a perspective enables us to think of shepherding as a readiness, an attitude, or a point of view that is never absent from the shepherd and is therefore in some way involved in all his feelings and actions.<sup>24</sup>

Shepherding is not the whole of ministry; it is an aspect of ministry. When the need arises, shepherding is a readiness to let its perspective be dominant in a particular setting. Shepherding is present to some degree in every act of ministry, but it is dominant only in some of them.

Communicating is the second perspective of the function-focused branch of theology.

Communicating deals with the functional goal of getting the 'Word' into the minds and hearts and lives of people, individually and collectively, regardless of the amount of such understanding they may have had prior to the event.<sup>25</sup>

Communicating does not refer to all acts of communication. It is limited to the actions of communication of the Christian message. On the other hand, communicating is not limited simply to the spoken word of the gospel. The communicating perspective finds its focus in the saving truth, and saving knowledge. But saving truth and knowledge are not in separate compartments from other types of truth and

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<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 56.

knowledge. In the communicating perspective, saving truth and saving knowledge are focal points, and all other forms of truth and knowledge represent the general field. There is no categorical distinction between a sacred gospel and secular knowledge.<sup>26</sup> There is only a difference of focal points.

Sometimes communicating takes place unintentionally. Often it takes place through activities that would seem unrelated to communicating. Even though communicating may not be the dominant perspective in a given act of ministry, it will still be present in that act. The study of communicating cannot be limited solely to such events as preaching and teaching. "The study of communicating must involve all types of pastoral operations or events."<sup>27</sup>

The third operation-centered perspective of theology is organizing. By organizing is meant,

. . . that perspective upon the operations of pastor and church that makes the fellowship cohere and that determines its relationships as a fellowship with everything that is not of the fellowship.<sup>28</sup>

Hiltner identifies two aspects or phases within the perspective of organizing. The first phase is the process of focusing on a human fellowship. It is the process of forming, maintaining, and bringing to life the church as a body. Literally, organizing means "the processes by which the organs (interconnected parts) are formed, maintained, and act."<sup>29</sup> The second phase of organizing involves the

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<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 198.

relatedness of the fellowship to the world. The fellowship is influenced by and exerts influence on the world. In this instance, the world represents the field and the Christian fellowship is the focus. The first phase of organizing is the act of bringing the field to focus in a Christian fellowship. The second phase is the process of exploring and determining the relationship between the focal point and the general field.<sup>30</sup>

Shepherding, communicating, and organizing are Seward Hiltner's functional perspectives of ministry. They form the theoretical basis for operation-centered theology. Functional theologies can emanate from each perspective similar to the manner that theologies spring from the disciplines of the logic-centered branch of theology. Shepherding, communicating, and organizing represent essential aspects and qualities of Christian ministry. Without the presence of all of them in any given act, ministry does not take place. Not only are shepherding, communicating, and organizing, abstract perspectives, they are also concrete activities. They are activities as well as ways of acting.

Both immanent and transcendent characteristics are present in the three perspectives. The focal points of the perspectives are transcendent in character. They represent the "givens" of the Christian faith. Without the focal points, the perspectives would merely be descriptive categories in the tradition of the system of church offices. The field of the perspectives maintains the doctrine of immanence.

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<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 61.

While not necessarily being the focus, everything in the field has a relation to the focus.<sup>31</sup>

Thus far in this chapter the theoretical framework for Hiltner's functional perspectives of ministry has been of central concern. First, his theological methodology was considered. Hiltner's approach to theology is an empirical one that combines the traditional theological disciplines with the functional and scientific areas. Next, Hiltner's model for organizing theological knowledge and study was examined with a view toward understanding his rationale for a functional approach to theology and ministry. According to Hiltner, the logic-centered fields of theology represent only one branch of theology. Another branch is needed in order to complete the picture; an operation-centered branch of theology.

The sources of information for the operation-centered branch of theology are the functions of church and minister. Hiltner rejects the traditional organization of the ministry as incapable of dealing with basic theory because it does not adequately isolate the essential qualities of ministry. Thus, he proposes a new organization of ministry that more adequately portrays the essential aspects of ministry, and at the same time provides a better ground for theological exploration. The proposed organization includes three functional perspectives of ministry. These perspectives are included in Hiltner's model for organizing theological knowledge and study under the heading of

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<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 58.



"operation-centered areas."

Having found the rationale for his approach to ministry, the next area of exploration was the influence of the scientific model known as field theory upon Hiltner's thought. Field theory was found to be a fundamental characteristic of Hiltner's proposed model for organizing theology. Field theory permeates all levels of the model, including the whole body of divinity, the three operation-centered perspectives as they relate to one another, and to the perspectives as they exist as individual fields.

After examining the relation of field theory to Hiltner's thought, attention was turned to his functional perspectives of ministry. Since perspective is a technical term for Hiltner, the meaning of the word was discussed. Then each of the three operation-centered perspectives was briefly defined.

### THREE OPERATION-CENTERED PERSPECTIVES OF MINISTRY

Shepherding, communicating, and organizing have already been described as the three operation-centered perspectives of ministry. Each of them has been briefly defined. In this section of the chapter there will be an attempt to further elucidate the three perspectives of ministry through examining their subdivisions.

In *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, Seward Hiltner's fundamental interest is the development of pastoral theology. He has proposed his model for organizing theological knowledge as an impetus for the development of more rigorous pastoral theologies. According to Hiltner

pastoral theology emerges from the shepherding perspective of the operation-centered areas of theology. Thus, the central thrust of his book is toward exploring the ramifications of his model on the shepherding perspective and pastoral theology. Unfortunately, this means Hiltner spends less time in a detailed study of the other two functional perspectives and their theological potentialities. Since *Preface to Pastoral Theology* is the only major work in which Hiltner elaborates on his perspectival approach to ministry, the resources for detailing the communicating and organizing perspectives are somewhat limited.

Seward Hiltner has gone so far as to subdivide each of the three perspectives into their various aspects and to indicate the direction these aspects should take. Rather than any single perspective of ministry, the major concern of this chapter is Hiltner's understanding of ministry as a whole. Therefore, instead of centering on the shepherding perspective, this study will attempt to bring to light all three perspectives of ministry.

Hiltner has divided each of the perspectives into three subgroups. Frequently he uses the term "aspects" in regard to them. Although he never speaks directly to the issue, the aspects of the perspectives appear to be of the same order of organization as the perspectives themselves. All of the subgroups are represented by single words in the form of the present participle. Each of the subgroups under a given perspective are to be considered a necessary aspect of the perspective. Without all three aspects present, the respective

perspective is not complete. In a manner similar to the three perspectives of ministry, the aspects of perspectives have moments of dominance when they are the focal point; and moments when they are merely a part of the general field.<sup>32</sup>

### Shepherding

The three aspects of the shepherding perspective are healing, sustaining, and guiding. "Healing is to be understood as the process of restoring functional wholeness."<sup>33</sup> To interpret what he means by functional wholeness Hiltner appeals to the image of an organism.

An organism is a functional whole. Some parts of an organ are more vital to its existence than others. Hence, the success of healing does not depend on total restoration of all functions. Functional wholeness is the focal point of the healing aspect; it is a direction in process. Hiltner formally defines healing as "the restoration of functional wholeness that has been impaired as to direction and/or schedule."<sup>34</sup> He notes that healing is made necessary by several factors; they are defect, invasion, distortion, and decision. Neither healing nor these causal factors are to be interpreted simply in a physical or bodily sense. Hiltner rejects the categorical separation of mind and body "in favor of the organismic theory that regards body and mind as two basic perspectives upon the organism."<sup>35</sup> Both the mind and the

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<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 92.

body are involved in all impairments and healings.

The second aspect of the shepherding perspective is sustaining. Whereas healing takes place when restoration to functional wholeness is feasible, sustaining is the aspect that takes place when the total situation cannot change.

Sustaining is the ministry of support and encouragement through standing by when what had been a whole has been broken or impaired and is incapable of total situational restoration, or at least not now.<sup>36</sup>

Hiltner points to bereavement, inoperable cancer, and arterial degeneration as illustrations of moments when total situational restoration is not possible. In such instances sustaining is the dominant aspect through which the minister offers tender and solicitous care.

Sustaining is not a category entirely removed from healing. A sustaining ministry that is satisfied to sustain, may lose the opportunity of healing. Healing is a part of the field that finds its focal point in sustaining. The inability to heal must not deter the shepherd from performing a sustaining ministry.

But where every failure to heal is a spur to inquiry, and a constant battle is maintained to get funds, personnel, and proper public interest, then even those who cannot be healed become sustained in a genuine sense.<sup>37</sup>

Both healing and sustaining are aimed in the direction of restoring functional wholeness. The differences between them are circumstantial and thus call for a different viewpoint.

Guiding is the third aspect of the shepherding perspective.

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<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 139.

Hiltner is somewhat fearful of the unintended connotations that guiding may carry, so he carefully explains what it is not. Guiding does not include "coercion, persuasion, interpretation, and the definition of alternatives."<sup>38</sup> These may be present and relevant factors in some ministerial situations, but they are not a part of guiding as it is found in the shepherding perspective.

Hiltner calls for an educative interpretation of guiding. What he means by educative is "drawing more and more of the solution to the situation out of the creative potentialities of the person needing help."<sup>39</sup> While not forgetting the importance of external sources of help, educative guiding is especially aware of the internal resources of those needing help. External resources, such as the words, feelings, knowledge and convictions of the pastor "are drawn upon only as they may evoke or educe from and within the parishioner that which he will regard as his."<sup>40</sup> What a person regards as "his" is constantly changing so that the insights that come to one may also change.

All three aspects of the shepherding perspective are educative in character. The healing and sustaining processes depend upon the interaction of internals and externals. In all three processes the shepherd functions through helping another person discover the creative potentialities that are his. Though guiding has the same direction as

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<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>39</sup>Hiltner, *Pastoral Counseling*, p. 97.

<sup>40</sup>Hiltner, *Preface*, p. 153.

healing and sustaining, there is a difference of viewpoint.

Whereas sustaining is to be understood as a thrust toward healing but slowed or stopped by circumstance, it was argued that guiding should be conceived as a thrust toward healing mainly through reminder of resources that have been present, are now absent or weak, but will return.<sup>41</sup>

### Communicating

The three aspects of the communicating perspective are learning, realizing, and celebrating. Traditionally, communicating the gospel has been divided into two areas: communicating to those inside the faith and communicating to those outside the faith.

For those not in the faith communicating was 'evangelism,' 'apostolics,' 'halieutics,' or 'apologetics.' . . . For those inside the faith communicating was more regularly seen in three aspects: instructing or 'catechetics'; celebrating or worshipping or 'liturgics'; and 'edifying' as deepening in the faith, usually identified with congregational preaching.<sup>42</sup>

Hiltner denies that between Christians and non-Christians there is a fundamental difference in processes. Hence the three aspects of the communicating perspective are considered applicable to persons inside and outside of the faith. Learning, realizing and celebrating are the aspects through which the ministry of communicating relates to Christians and non-Christians.

Hiltner assimilates the three traditional aspects of communicating to those within the faith into his own system of thought. But he changes the character of the traditional aspects in two important ways. First, he broadens the scope to include those persons outside

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<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 179.

the faith. Second, he views the aspects in the light of field theory. Learning, realizing and celebrating are related to one another as focal points with fields. All three are always present when communicating takes place.

Learning is synonymous with instructing, understanding, and catechetics. It is the process of clarifying. Learning is both a viewpoint and an activity. Finding its focus in the "saving truth," learning applies to Christians and non-Christians alike. While learning is a focal point itself, realizing and celebrating are always a part of the general field. Learning is related to realizing in that learning, "becomes the realizing or assimilating of what we had not known or possessed previously."<sup>43</sup>

Realizing is the second aspect of communicating. Hiltner also uses the words "deepening" and "edifying" to describe this aspect. Realizing is the process of internalizing and integrating that which has become clear through instruction. In the same manner that learning is a continuing process, realizing is a continuing development.

Unless the gospel is received more deeply, unless there is a continuing process by which the Word ('what drives Christ') is assimilated, that which was 'in power and beginning' stops there and more likely regresses. Edifying communication is needed.<sup>44</sup>

Realizing is more than adding words to a blank sheet of paper. Each person possesses a personal history which has been assimilated, evaluated and integrated through experience. When learning takes

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<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 180.

place, new information is evaluated and integrated into the structure of meaning the person possesses. Sometimes new information alters the structures of meaning, and at other times it simply reinforces them. "Realizing or deepening becomes the recognition of new, deeper, or broader meaning to that which has been known or possessed before."<sup>45</sup>

The third aspect of communicating is celebrating. Hiltner also uses the terms "reminding" and "commemorating" in characterizing this aspect of communicating. Celebrating is the act of deepening the process of realizing. This process of deeper assimilating is not arrived at through new ideas or perceptions of new structures of meaning. It is through reminding and corporate acknowledging.<sup>46</sup> Celebrating, in the same manner as learning and realizing, applies to those outside the faith as well as those inside the faith. It is also coincidental with learning and realizing in all Christian communicating.

### Organizing

Hiltner is more explicit concerning the aspects of the organizing perspective of ministry than he is with the aspects of the communicating perspective. In exploring his understanding of organizing he uses the biological metaphor of an organism. He also makes note of the Pauline metaphor of "the body of Christ." The three aspects of organizing Hiltner suggests are influenced by the organic metaphor. The three aspects are nourishing, protecting, and relating.

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<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*



"Nourishing is to aid organic development in its subjective or autonomous aspect, when threat is minimal."<sup>47</sup> The organs within an organism have a degree of functional autonomy. Particular organs are capable of performing specific functions, but not all organs can perform the same functions. The functions of an organ and the organ itself would be vacant of meaning if not for their context within the whole organism. Organic development is the movement toward more intricate differentiations within organisms, bringing about greater organic complexity, flexibility, and specificity, "in order to create a more intricate order of functional unity."<sup>48</sup> Hence, nourishing is the activity of helping make possible greater organic complexity, flexibility, and specificity, in order to bring about greater functional unity. This feeding of the organism can be dominant only when threat from the outside is minimal.

Protecting is the second aspect of the organizing perspective. The existence of an organism depends upon an internal balance of support and tension. An organ without tension is void of life, but an organ whose parts refuse to cooperate would disintegrate.<sup>49</sup> Non-cooperative parts are threats from within an organism. There are also threats from outside the organism that can impinge upon it and cause damage. Protecting is the process of "purifying from threats within or without. . . ."<sup>50</sup> Hiltner points out that protecting is most

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<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 200.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 201.

frequently dominant in matters of discipline and morality.

The third aspect of organizing is relating. Organisms do not exist in vacuums; other organisms make up the environment in which an organism exists. Some relation to one's environment is an unavoidable necessity. Relating is not necessarily the dominant character of the organizing perspective at all moments. Sometimes relating is merely a part of the general field. "Relating is dominant when threat or potentiality from other bodies demands attention."<sup>51</sup>

Before summarizing this chapter on Seward Hiltner's functional perspectives of ministry a final observation needs to be made. According to Hiltner there is no concrete event or operation from which the three perspectives of ministry are absent. All three perspectives will be present in every event. In some situations one of the perspectives may be dominant over the others but the others will still be present. Furthermore, the same is true of each of the aspects of the perspectives. For example, nourishing, protecting and relating are present in all organizing, and in every instance of organizing.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, every aspect of every perspective is present in every concrete event or operation.

#### SUMMARY

This chapter has been an attempt to elucidate Seward Hiltner's functional concept of ministry. It began by exploring the theoretical

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

framework which provides the setting for his three operation-centered perspectives of ministry. The three operation-centered perspectives of ministry are the result of a reorganization of the traditional offices of ministry into their essential aspects. Hiltner's claim is that the functional perspectives provide the theoretical basis for an operation-centered branch of theology. Each of the three areas is the functional base through which a potential, disciplined theology can develop. Hence, Hiltner has proposed a model for organizing theological knowledge and study.

Seward Hiltner backs up his theological method of combining the functional and scientific with the theological through the scientific model known as field theory. Through field theory, Hiltner advocates the relatedness of all knowledge and activity. Ultimately, the Christian faith and the Christian life are completely intertwined. Still, one can observe moments when one appears to dominate the other. Both aspects are always present, yet one aspect becomes the focal point in some situations. Field theory, with its focal points and general fields, permeates the entire structure of Hiltner's theological model. This is particularly true of the functional perspectives of ministry.

Through field theory, transcendence and immanence remain viable descriptive terms for Hiltner. The focal points of the various perspectives are transcendent, for they represent the "givens" of the Christian faith. The focal points represent essential qualities in which the transcendent is present. The general fields preserve the content of immanence. While not actually being the focal point at a

given moment in time, the general field maintains a relationship to the focus.

After considering Hiltner's theological and scientific models, the next step in the chapter was to take a closer look at his three operation-centered perspectives of ministry. Since Hiltner uses the word "perspective" as a technical term, it was briefly defined. Then the three perspectives, shepherding, communicating, and organizing were defined. Having defined and considered the relationships of shepherding, communicating and organizing, the next phase of the chapter was to examine their various aspects.

In a systematic manner, Hiltner included three subgroupings under each of the three perspectives. Characteristically, the aspects of perspectives are also influenced by field theory. Each of the aspects are essential components of the perspectives under which they are grouped. Each aspect may become dominant in a given setting of time and place, but otherwise it remains a part of the general field.

Seward Hiltner has a functional understanding of ministry. Ministry is an operation-centered endeavor. Even though ministry is concrete and operational, it is also abstract and complex. Ministry is not simply the activity of applying the Christian faith as interpreted through theology. Ministry is also the activity of helping interpret the Christian faith and defining theology.

## CHAPTER IV

### A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF PAUL AND HILTNER

All persons are subject to limitations of time and circumstance; and this is true with Paul the Apostle and Seward Hiltner. Both men have lived in particular eras of human history, and have been located in particular places. The time and place in history each of them has experienced has dramatically influenced them. While it may be true in some sense that Paul and Hiltner transcend the viewpoints provided them through time and circumstance, it is also true that they are men belonging to the culture which they have experienced. Much of the distinctive character of their concepts of ministry is the result of differences between their cultures. The scope and depth of each of their visions of ministry is limited by time and circumstance.

Not only are Paul and Hiltner limited by time and circumstance, they also provide Paul and Hiltner separate windows through which each can observe different characteristics and implications of ministry. Paul's vision of ministry is a unique perspective which can serve to strengthen and correct other visions, such as Hiltner's. The reverse is also somewhat true; Hiltner's understanding of ministry can aid in strengthening and correcting the vision of Paul. Each event of time and circumstance is another opportunity through which a unique contribution to the understanding of ministry can become reality. Paul and Hiltner have seized opportunities through their places in

history and their common concern with ministry to make unique contributions to its understanding.

The purpose of this chapter is to critically evaluate the contributions of Paul the Apostle and Seward Hiltner toward developing a vital concept of ministry. First, the Pauline approach to ministry will be criticized by examining its strengths and weaknesses. Following the criticism of Paul, Seward Hiltner's understanding of ministry will be examined in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. Hopefully, through criticizing the perspectives on ministry of these men, the essential unity of their visions will emerge as well as their unique contributions to the understanding of ministry.

#### PAUL

The first step in evaluating Paul's approach to ministry will be to set forth the abiding strengths of his thought on the subject. One of these strengths is Paul's use of the graphic term *Diakonia*. *Diakonia* was a common, secular term whose meaning was clear to the people of Paul's day. It meant servanthood. As was shown earlier there are a number of other Greek words in the New Testament which have been translated "minister"; but it is the distinctive character of *Diakonia* that forms the basis of Paul's concept of ministry. *Diakonia* refers to a humble task performed by someone of humble position. *Diakonia* is a general term for service, broad in application, yet always functional in a specific setting. Most important, *Diakonia* is a voluntary service, and potentially a service of love. Ever since

Paul made use of *Diakonia*, the distinctive character of the term has been fundamental to the evolving understanding of ministry in the history of the Church. Most concepts of ministry presuppose that ministry is humble, functional, and devoted service. *Diakonia* is an indispensable term for understanding the essential character of ministry as it has existed through the ages.

Another strength of Paul's concept of ministry is that it is multi-dimensional. The interplay between his use of *Diakonia* and his cosmology is what makes Paul's concept multi-dimensional. While *Diakonia* asserts that ministry is humble, functional, and devoted; Paul's cosmology insists that ministry is exalted, abstract, and involuntary. Paul does not attempt to explain away or lessen the friction between these two paradoxical descriptions of ministry. Instead one receives the impression that both sets of characteristics coexist in all ministry.

The fundamental values at stake in Paul's multi-dimensional approach to ministry are transcendence and immanence. The descriptive characteristics of *Diakonia* represent the immanent reality of ministry. The worldly, human perspective of ministry is described by *Diakonia*. But it is the transcendent reality of the cosmos that transforms ministry into something more than drudgery. Through a multi-dimensional approach, Paul proclaims the unique character of Christian ministry. Christian ministry is ordinary, humble service, transformed by the transcendent presence of God. For ministry to maintain its unique character, a multi-dimensional approach is necessary. Immanence and

transcendence are vital elements of Christian ministry, and without them the uniqueness of ministry is lost.

A third strength of the Pauline concept of ministry is its cosmological approach. While not attempting to defend the specific form of Paul's cosmology, dualistic eschatology, it must be noted that his general approach has merit. According to *Webster's Dictionary*, cosmology is "a branch of metaphysics that deals with the universe as an orderly system."<sup>1</sup> Paul's concept of ministry is an attempt to deal with the order he saw in the universe. The central thrust of his cosmological concept is that people have an important place in the order of the universe. Their activities influence the character of the universe in which God is working toward His own purposes. The significance and meaningfulness of human activity is determined by its relation to God and His activity.

Paul's cosmological stance makes possible several values of great importance to Christian ministry. One is that God's activity is fulfilled within the universe. The transcendent power is present and functioning toward its goals in an immanent sense. Ministry is activity with and on behalf of God. Another important value Paul's stance affirms is the assertion of the meaningfulness of all human activity. Whatever people do with their lives has an impact on the character of the universe. Hence, ministry is meaningful activity. A third value of Paul's cosmological approach is that it affirms that

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<sup>1</sup> *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam, 1965), p. 188.



the activity of people is significant to all of God's creation. This value has taken on new relevance in contemporary times as people have begun to perceive the interdependence of all aspects of the physical universe. Perhaps a final observation will suffice to establish the importance of a cosmological stance such as found in Paul. His cosmology gives an action-centered orientation to ministry. Through a cosmological approach Paul stresses above all else that ministry is important, and meaningful activity.

A fourth strength of the Pauline approach to ministry to be discussed is in reality an aspect of his cosmology. Paul emphasizes the voluntary-involuntary nature of ministry. All persons are necessarily ministers. Humans do not have choice as to whether or not they will or will not be ministers; everyone serves. But mankind can choose whom it will serve. Servanthood is unavoidable but the servant has a choice of masters.

The strength of Paul's voluntary-involuntary approach to ministry is threefold. First, it recognizes the ability of all to serve. Servanthood is the unavoidable result of human activity. All persons, no matter what their life situation have the ability to minister through their activities. Second, the voluntary-involuntary approach stresses the common responsibility and accountability of all. No single individual or group of individuals is responsible for the ministry of the whole community or congregation. Each person is responsible for his own ministry. Third, the voluntary-involuntary approach provides a unique Christian perspective through which all events and

activities can be evaluated. For servanthood is not simply the role of the church, it is the activity of all persons.

A fifth strength of Paul's concept of ministry is in regard to its transcendent relatedness. Ministry is recognizable through the relatedness of its forms. The forms of ministry are unified through transcendent and immanent characteristics. In Paul, the transcendent unity of ministry is most apparent. The ministry of God may assume a variety of forms, but these forms are united and recognizable by having "the same Lord" (I Cor. 12:5). The transcendent power of God is the presence that unites and distinguishes Christian ministry from other human activity.

A final abiding strength of Paul's concept of ministry is the exaltation-of-the-humble motif. The ministry of God is humble, concrete service; there is nothing manifestly extraordinary about it. Yet within the seemingly unimportant and commonplace activities of people an exalted and splendid task is being performed. God is being served and the fulfilling of his kingdom is being brought about. Within the exaltation-of-the-humble motif, Paul's excitement about ministry radiates. Here ministry becomes more than just another concept or doctrine; here it is a stirring and emotive experience. The ministry of God may appear humble to the world, but in reality it is splendid (II Cor. 3:3-9).

Perhaps there are other strengths that could be detailed concerning Paul's approach to Christian ministry, but the most important ones have been indicated. Moving on, some weaknesses of Paul's approach

will now be noted. There are two significant weaknesses in Paul's approach to ministry. The first of these weaknesses is his eschatological dualism. There may be some today who would defend the potential of either eschatology or dualism, but not many would attempt to defend their combined form as found in Paul's writings.

According to Paul, God created the cosmos, but through some unexplained means Satan took charge of the world. Until the arrival of Jesus Christ, mankind was in bondage to the power of Satan. But Jesus Christ was the eschatological occurrence which put an end to the reign of Satan. Satan is still a mighty factor in the troubles of the world, but he is definitely on his way out. God's salvation is at work in the world, giving mankind a choice between serving God or Satan. People can opt to work for the fulfillment of God's reign or they can go down to defeat along with Satan. But people must be aware that God will eventually win the battle regardless of who they work for.

One problem with Paul's dualistic eschatology is in regard to the relationship between God and Satan. Where does Satan come from and why did God allow him to get control of the world? If the power of God and Satan are unequal, how is mankind free to choose between them? If Satan was in control of the world before Jesus Christ and mankind was in bondage to sin, does that mean that humanity was totally bad before Jesus Christ? These and many more questions could be and have been asked concerning the relationship of God and Satan. Clearly, the point is that the dualism of God and Satan pose many difficulties for current thought patterns.

Another problem with the Pauline dualistic eschatology is that although it appears to place responsibility in the hands of humanity, in reality responsibility is not there at all. The inevitability of God's final victory robs humanity of responsibility for the course of events in the world. Mankind's choice between the powers of the universe is merely a matter of choosing on which bandwagon to jump. People are responsible only for themselves and not for the course of events around them. Paul clearly intends to emphasize the significance of ministry, but his dualistic eschatology prevents him from doing so consistently.

The second basic weakness of the Pauline approach to ministry is that he deals inadequately with the immanent relatedness of servanthood. Stated earlier as a strength was the fact that Paul emphasizes the transcendent relatedness of Christian ministry through his claim that there are "varieties of ministry but the same Lord" (I Cor. 12:5). But he ignores the immanent relatedness of the varieties of ministry. The forms of ministry are united through commonly held functional characteristics which are immanently related to one another. The distinctiveness of Christian ministry not only depends upon the transcendent presence of God, but also upon the relatedness of ministry's immanent functional characteristics. In Paul, the immanent relatedness of ministry is not discussed.

The strengths and weaknesses of the Pauline understanding of ministry have been examined. The abiding strengths of his approach are impressive when one considers the time that has lapsed since his

concept of ministry first emerged. Those aspects of his thought described as weaknesses are also being evaluated from a perspective twenty centuries removed from their introduction. Paul's concept of ministry has greatly influenced Christian history and will continue as an active force in the future of the Church.

#### SEWARD HILTNER

Seward Hiltner's understanding of ministry has been proposed in this century, and is thus more easily criticized. His thoughts have not weathered the storm of centuries of perusal, nor are they enshrined with the same kind of respect as the ideas of Paul. As was done with Paul, first the strengths and then the weaknesses of Seward Hiltner's approach to ministry will be examined.

A major strength in Hiltner's approach is his theological methodology. In Hiltner one finds no typological distinction between religious truth and scientific truth. The differences between them are only matters of perspective. Hiltner's theological methodology, based in process theology, asserts that theological questions can be directed toward Christian life as well as toward Christian faith, and theological answers will arise. There is no dualistic separation between the power of God and the power of the world. Knowledge of the world contributes to knowledge of God and vice versa.

Two distinct values for ministry are to be found in Hiltner's theological methodology. First, his theological approach is cosmological. It considers the nature of God through examining the

structures of reality. God's purpose and intention are interwoven inextricably with the activities of the universe. If theology is to have validity it must be done in cooperation with the physical sciences, for God's presence and activity is to be found in all of reality. The cosmological thrust of Hiltner's theology is important for ministry because it elevates the significance of all human activity.

The second value of Seward Hiltner's theological methodology is that it stresses the pertinence of ministry to theological reflection. The activity of ministry can make possible theological growth, and depth of understanding. The activity of ministry is not just a setting for living out the Christian faith; it is a setting for growth in the Christian faith.

A second basic strength of Hiltner's understanding of ministry is rooted in his theological methodology and his scientific model which is known as field theory. The strength is Hiltner's multi-dimensional approach to ministry. The idea that ministry is operative on more than a single plane is crucial to its vitality. Ministry is not just immanent and concrete; it is abstract and transcendent. The importance of ministry rests in the recognition that the transcendent power of God is present in the immanent activity of persons. Human activity is more important than it superficially appears to be, and ministry as the intentional activity of serving God is crucial. Both Hiltner's theological method and scientific model are designed to illustrate the multi-dimensional character of ministry, and this is a fundamental strength of his approach.

Another strength of Hiltner's approach is his realization of the importance of the immanent relatedness of all ministry. Through his proposed operation-centered perspectives of ministry and their various aspects, Hiltner has affirmed that ministry has functional characteristics within the servant motif. The operation-centered perspectives are immanent and functional, yet they point beyond themselves to the transcendent reality. Not only are these functional characteristics present in ministry, they are interrelated as qualities present in all ministry. Through field theory, Hiltner has attempted to establish the immanent and transcendent relatedness of ministry. Each of the perspectives is a focal point within the general field of ministry. Each of the perspectives have focal points, and each of the aspects of perspectives are focal points; and each of the aspects have focal points of their own. In other words, all ministry is characterized by commonly held functional characteristics that are completely interrelated. Not only is ministry united in intention through having the same Lord, it is united by functional characteristics that are immanently related.

A fourth, fundamental strength of Hiltner's concept of ministry are the three operation-centered perspectives themselves. As was discussed in a preceding chapter, the three perspectives of ministry are shepherding, communicating, and organizing. Hiltner arrived at these three qualities through reflecting on Christian ministry as it has appeared in traditional forms throughout the centuries. He has attempted to define the essential aspects of ministry as they have

existed throughout history. Whereas preaching, teaching, pastoral care, and the other traditional offices of ministry have often been effective forms of ministry their relatedness has only been established on transcendent grounds. Their immanent relatedness has not been established. Individually, none of them have provided adequate theoretical bases for establishing immanent relatedness, or for making significant contributions to theology. Hence, Hiltner has proposed that shepherding, communicating, and organizing comprise the essential elements of all the traditional offices of ministry, and more theoretically sound units at that. The three perspectives avoid the rigidity of the traditional offices since they do not represent static forms. They are processes, open to old and new forms; the norm being the facilitation of ministry. Each of the perspectives is a potential branch of theology, because each of them represents abstract quality as well as concrete form. A final value of each of the perspectives is their descriptive worth. While the potential forms and implications of ministry remain vast, the three perspectives bring descriptive limitation to it. Servanthood, a vague concept to many contemporary persons, is given clarity through Hiltner's use of the descriptive terms, shepherding, communicating, and organizing.

A fifth strength of Seward Hiltner's approach to ministry needs to be mentioned. Hiltner's purpose in writing *Preface to Pastoral Theology* was to open the door for the development of pastoral theology. On the way to this purpose he opened a broader door, to what may be called function-centered theology. Function-centered theology is



composed of three theological branches, each initiated through reflection on one of the three perspectives of ministry. Function-centered theology is ministerial theology. The result of Hiltner's stressing of the necessity and importance for developing pastoral theology, is an emphasis on the need for function-centered theology. In turn, the result of the emphasis on function-centered theology is a pushing for the reflective responsibility of ministers.

Ministry and theology are indispensable to one another. Ministry is a primary setting for growing in one's understanding of God. To the degree that one better understands God; one can better serve Him. Without the corrective of experience, theology can wander off into vague and meaningless assertions. Thus, Hiltner's approach to ministry provides an important reflective emphasis.

Having noted the strengths of Seward Hiltner's understanding of ministry, it is now time to indicate some of the weaknesses of his approach. First among the weaknesses of Hiltner's concept, is the inadequate acknowledgement of a crucial presupposition. Hiltner fails to mention the important role of the servant motif in his three perspectives of ministry. The servant motif is the foundational acknowledgement of a particular kind of relationship man has with God. This relationship is one of servant and master. The presupposition upon which Hiltner's three operation-centered perspectives exist is that persons desire to serve the will of God. Shepherding, communicating, and organizing are carried out by servants. Servanthood involves implications regarding the relationship between God and man that

Hiltner has opted to ignore.

A second, somewhat minor, negative criticism of Hiltner's concept of ministry is in terms of his use of the word "shepherding." Some have noted that shepherding is an outmoded term if one is talking to contemporary persons. How many people identify with the image of a shepherd anymore? Another problem with shepherding in contemporary usage revolves around the fact that "ordinary usage in Roman Catholic pastoral theology is that 'shepherding' refers to the work of the priest as 'ruler' of the flock."<sup>2</sup> Hiltner does not wish to confuse shepherding with ruling. Though "shepherding" is a term of rich Christian heritage, perhaps a replacement more suitable to the urban culture of today could be found.

A third weakness, more important than the one just discussed, is in regard to Hiltner's use of the scientific model, field theory. Coval B. MacDonald has some insightful comments on Hiltner's use of field theory. While MacDonald approves of the use of scientific and technological models to help shape theological models, he believes there is a more adequate model than field theory for supporting Hiltner's theological construction.<sup>3</sup> MacDonald points out the inability of Hiltner's scientific model to add complete clarity to his concept by pointing to the phrase "aspects of a perspective." The lack of clarity

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<sup>2</sup>James N. Lapsley, "Pastoral Theology Past and Present," in William B. Oglesby, Jr. (ed.) *The New Shape of Pastoral Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), p. 43.

<sup>3</sup>Coval B. MacDonald, "Methods of Study in Pastoral Theology," in Oglesby, p. 165.

in this phrase is self-evident. Talking about Hiltner's use of the word "aspect" MacDonald goes on to say,

Feeling a bit uncomfortable with the lack of clarity in the word aspect, he appeals to the analogy of a prism in which a beam of light is broken into different colors. However, in spite of the analogy, healing and sustaining and guiding are neither aspects nor even perspectives. They are systems organized around particular functions and linked to a major system which is shepherding. One need not stop with the rather vague notion of aspect, but one can go on and examine healing, sustaining, and guiding as subsystems of an overall system.<sup>4</sup>

Hence, MacDonald's proposal is that general systems theory be substituted for field theory. In any case, it is quite apparent that although field theory is able to be rigorous to a point, it "fails to deal with such data as systems of force and linkage of functions, leaving us with the imprecision of 'aspects of a perspective.'"<sup>5</sup>

One final weakness of Seward Hiltner's approach to ministry needs to be noted. Hiltner's understanding of ministry lacks power from the transcendent realm. After reading Hiltner's work, one is quite clear that ministry contributes to theology; but one is left wondering what God contributes to ministry. Hiltner has thoroughly dealt with immanent relatedness of ministry, but has in the process minimized the transcendent relatedness. True, Hiltner has suggested the presence of God in ministry as the giver of focal points. The focal points within the operation-centered perspectives are "givens," perceived by the minister, but not created by him. Furthermore, Hiltner has left a place for God's presence in the immanent activity

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<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

of persons. Still, how does God's presence unify ministry? How is God's presence experienced as one engages in ministry? Hiltner has chosen not to get into these questions. Of course, one must also remember that Hiltner is not claiming to present a systematic functional theology, he is presenting only a *Preface to Pastoral Theology*.

This chapter has sought to critically evaluate the contributions of Paul the Apostle and Seward Hiltner toward a vital concept of Christian ministry. The concepts of ministry of both men have strengths and weaknesses. The author acknowledges that the greater part of the criticism of this chapter has been personal and limited through time and circumstance. Hopefully, the strengths and weaknesses noted in this chapter have some validity for this moment in history.

## CHAPTER V

### AN INTEGRATION OF PAUL AND HILTNER

The purpose of this dissertation is to propose a revitalized concept of Christian ministry. The methodology for accomplishing this purpose has included the examination and criticism of two understandings of ministry; one belonging to Paul the Apostle, and the other belonging to Seward Hiltner. The author of this dissertation believes that by integrating the thought of Paul and Hiltner, a concept of ministry emerges that has renewed vitality. The task of this chapter is to propose a revitalized concept of ministry through integrating the thoughts of Paul the Apostle and Seward Hiltner.

This task will be accomplished through three stages. First, the points of persistent tension between the two men's concepts will be discussed. One cannot expect the ideas of two men separated by such vast stretches of time and history to easily fall together in place. The second stage will examine the points of contact through which the integration of Paul and Hiltner will take place. These points of contact are avenues through which the mutuality of their opinions flow. The third stage of the task will be to explicate the complementary nature of Paul and Hiltner's understandings of ministry. Hopefully, the integration of their concepts of ministry leads to a whole greater than the sum of its parts, a revitalized concept of Christian ministry.

## POINTS OF TENSION

The tensions between Paul and Hiltner's concepts of ministry are many. At many points their selected emphases are different. Yet most of these differences are not major problems. Without differences of opinion Paul and Hiltner would be of little value to one another. They could serve only to add authority to the statements made by one another. Indeed, the tension which exists between their approaches is what makes possible a complementary integration of their thought. The individual contribution of each adds something to the thought of the other.

On the other hand, the value of tension has its limits. Some ideas simply cannot stand beside one another and mutually contribute to understanding. One idea or the other must be dropped in order for anything to make sense. There is only one outstanding example of this second kind of tension between Paul's concept of ministry and Hiltner's.

The example is the relationship of Paul's dualistic eschatology and Hiltner's theological method is grounded in process theism, which is far removed from dualistic eschatology. Paul's dualism asserts the existence of a dichotomy of power in the universe: one power is God, and the other power is Satan. Furthermore, Satan is in control of the world, giving it an evil character. Hence, God is to be understood as in opposition to the world, and the power of the world. Paul's eschatology colors his dualism, by claiming that eventually God's power will win the battle against evil, and His kingdom will be established.

Dualistic eschatology and Hiltner's theological methodology

are irreconcilable. Process theism does not accept the existence of an evil spirit whose power is in opposition and competition with God. Process theists do recognize the presence of evil, yet tend not to identify it with any single sinister force. Process theologian, Henry Nelson Wieman, separates evil into seven different categories and then states,

In this discussion of evil we have made no attempt to cover all evils. That would be impossible because, as said in the beginning, evil is essentially multitudinous and diverse.<sup>1</sup>

The denial of the existence of Satan, cannot coexist in the same concept of ministry with the affirmation of Satan's presence. Either Satan is accepted or he is rejected.

Paul's dualism allows him to say that God and the world stand in opposition to one another. This too, is unacceptable to the theological stance known as process theology. As one well known process theologian has stated,

Against those who see us as being forced to choose God or the world, I am affirming that we must choose God and the world. To choose one against the other is in the end to reject both.<sup>2</sup>

The affirmation of the world cannot coexist with the rejection of the world; the acceptance of one position precludes the acceptance of the other.

The eschatological aspect of Paul's dualism is completely

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<sup>1</sup> Henry N. Wieman, *The Source of Human Good* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1946), p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> John B. Cobb, Jr., *God and the World* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 9.

intertwined with the battle between God and Satan, and for this reason is unacceptable to process theism. According to Paul the victory of God is predetermined. Rather than focusing hope in a predetermined victory, process thought identifies God with the "call forward."<sup>3</sup> But this does not mean that eschatology as such is unacceptable to process thought. Reflecting on eschatology as it is found in the New Testament, one process theologian has concluded that "the theme of eschatology is the promise of faith."<sup>4</sup>

By 'the promise of faith,' I understand the promise immediately implied in the witness of faith of Jesus Christ that we are all, each and every creature of us embraced everlastingly by the boundless love of God.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, it must be understood that Hiltner's theological methodology is not so much against eschatology or dualism; but it is adverse to dualistic eschatology as found in Paul. Paul's eschatological dualism and Hiltner's theological method fundamentally contradict one another and are therefore incapable of coexisting in healthy tension within a single conceptual framework.

Before the integration of Paul and Hiltner's concepts of ministry can proceed, one of their theological stances must be abandoned. In Chapter IV, Paul's dualistic eschatology was called a weakness in his concept of ministry, whereas Hiltner's theological methodology was

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<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup>Schubert M. Ogden, *The Reality of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 209.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 220.



called a strength. On the grounds of Paul's weakness and Hiltner's strength mentioned in that chapter, Paul's dualistic eschatology will be set aside. This does not mean that Paul's dualistic eschatology is without value. Through demythologizing, it may be found to contain a great amount of truth. But accepting Paul's dualistic eschatology at face value, as a basis of understanding the relationship of God and the universe would pose enormous problems for contemporary thought.

Seward Hiltner's theological methodology, based in process theology, will be embraced as a fundamental element in a revitalized concept of Christian ministry. Appealing for a conceptual framework that is scientific as well as metaphysical, process theism is particularly suitable to contemporary thought patterns.

#### POINTS OF CONTACT

In order for the thoughts of two men to be integrated into a conceptual whole, there need to be points of contact. Not only must they share a common concern; they need to share common approaches to their common concern. These points of contact make integration and unification possible. Paul and Hiltner are both concerned with ministry. There are also five means of approaching ministry which they hold in common. The five avenues of approach form the basis for an integrated, unified and revitalized concept of Christian ministry.

First, Paul and Hiltner hold in common the servant motif. Both accept that ministry is humble, functional, and devoted service. The relationship between God and man is one of master and servant. In

In relation to God, man's position is one of humility. His service to God is rendered through concrete activity in relation to the rest of humanity. The service of God is voluntary, for God does not compel one to serve.

A second, common characteristic of Paul and Hiltner's concepts of ministry is that they both place the ministry of Christ within the context of the Church. Though Paul does not assert that one must be a Christian in order to serve God, all examples of the ministry of God in Paul's writings reflect the setting of the Church. Seward Hiltner's concept of ministry is also formulated within the confines of the Church. For both men, the ministry of God is to be understood in the light of the body whose intention and desire is to do the will of God. Furthermore, this body is the one whose interpretation of God's will is molded through its perception of Jesus as the Christ.

Third, Paul and Hiltner hold in common a multi-dimensional approach to ministry. Both believe that ministry cannot be understood as existing on only one plane. For them, Christian ministry is both the activity of man serving God, and the activity of God giving direction to man's service. The ministry of God is not complete without both transcendence and immanence. The transcendent power of God is present in all ministry, transforming it into meaningful activity. Through the immanent activity of ministry the minister is better able to comprehend the transcendent power of God.

A fourth approach to ministry Paul and Hiltner hold in common is related to their multi-dimensional approaches. Both men understand

ministry in terms that are at once theological and cosmological. God is to be understood in relation to the structure of the universe, and vice versa. Knowledge about the structure of the universe contributes to knowledge about God; and knowledge of God aids in understanding the order of the cosmos. The universe is the field of God's activity, and through His presence the universe acquires direction and meaning. Hence, ministry is meaningful, earthly activity capable of contributing simultaneously to the character of the cosmos and humanity's understanding of God.

A fifth approach Paul and Hiltner hold in common is in showing the relatedness of ministry. Ministry is not an isolated category of human activity, separate from human activity as a whole. Rather, ministry is activity common to all humanity, distinctively identifiable through its unique transcendent and immanent qualities. Christian ministry is recognizable through functional characteristics that are unified in a discernible pattern of immanent relatedness. These functional characteristics are also unified through the transcendent relatedness of God. The unity of ministry is evident through the presence of transcendent and immanent qualities.

#### THE COMPLEMENTARY NATURE OF THE TWO APPROACHES

Having examined the points of contact through which the integration of Paul and Hiltner's concepts of ministry is possible, the time has come to demonstrate the complementary nature of the two approaches. This will be accomplished through re-examining the points

of contact with emphasis upon the unique contributions of Paul and Hiltner. Through integrating the unique contributions of these men one is able to envision a unified concept of ministry more complete than the individual ones they have proposed. One is able to discern a concept of ministry that is both viable and vital.

To begin again, it must be stated one more time that ministry is servanthood. *Diakonia* is the basic term Paul uses to express his concept of ministry. He uses *Diakonia* for its descriptive value. *Diakonia* refers to humble, functional, voluntary service offered to a master. This fundamental image of ministry has persisted throughout the centuries. Most concepts of ministry presuppose the qualities characterized by *Diakonia*. The servant motif, made explicit through Paul's use of *Diakonia*, is implicit within Seward Hiltner's concept of ministry. Implicit in Hiltner's concept of ministry is the idea that in humility and devotion, man desires to do the will of God. And doing the will of God, implies concrete, functional activity on earth.

Paul and Hiltner view ministry as multi-dimensional, involving both transcendent and immanent elements. Yet each man puts stress on one element over the other. Hiltner emphasizes the immanent nature of ministry through attempting to ascertain its essential functional characteristics. He proposes that ministry is comprised of three essential perspectives; shepherding, communicating, and organizing. Each of these perspectives may be broken down into its associated aspects.

On the other hand, Paul asserts the transcendent element over

the immanent. Rather than exploring the immanent implications of servanthood, Paul considers the impact of the transcendent presence of God on service. According to Paul, God's presence transforms ministry. What appears to be a simple concrete task, is in reality a cosmological task. What appears to be voluntary servitude, is in some respects involuntary. Most important, what appears to be humble, lowly duty, is through God's presence an exalted task.

An offshoot of Paul and Hiltner's multi-dimensional concepts of ministry is the problem of relatedness. Ministry is unified and recognizable through its transcendent and immanent relatedness. Hiltner stresses the immanent relatedness of ministry through the scientific model known as field theory. Through field theory Hiltner not only demonstrates the connectedness of the three perspectives, shepherding, communicating, and organizing, and their various aspects; he also shows the immanent relatedness of his whole model for theological knowledge and study. But Hiltner's field theory falls short in demonstrating the transcendent relatedness of ministry. The presence of God is vague and powerless.

Paul does not frequently direct himself to the point of relatedness, yet his emphasis is apparent. His most direct statement is that "there are varieties of ministry but the same Lord" (I Cor. 12:5). It is the presence of the Lord that unified Christian ministry. In time, ministry may take many diverse forms, yet it is the presence of God that makes it recognizable. In Paul's writings it is clear that God as understood through Jesus Christ is the power that gives direction

and form to ministry (II Cor. 3:3, 9:13).

Paul and Hiltner's concepts of ministry hold in common a theological and cosmological approach. While both men have mixed elements of theology and cosmology in their understandings of ministry, they each show a tendency to emphasize one element over the other. While denying Paul's specific type of cosmology, one can embrace the values of his cosmological emphasis. For Paul, the relation ministry to the universe is the factor which determines its importance. Through the ministry one performs, one's relationship to God is determined, and the character of the cosmos is formed. Paul's cosmological stance emphasizes the importance of human activity, and gives an action-centered orientation to his concept of ministry.

Perhaps the value of Paul's cosmological approach can be systematically assimilated through future exploration of Hiltner's cosmological and theological stance. Seward Hiltner's theological approach is grounded in process theism, and process theists affirm the importance of cosmology to theological investigation. Working from a base in process theology, Hiltner has proposed a model for organizing theological knowledge and study. Hiltner's understanding of ministry is situated in his theological model under the title of "operation-centered areas." Hence, Hiltner's overriding concern for theology permeates his concept of ministry. Whereas the thrust of Paul's concept of ministry is action, the thrust of Hiltner's concept is theological reflection. Both elements are important for a vital concept of ministry.

Finally, Paul and Hiltner place the ministry of God within the

context of the Church. Yet their views of the Church and its ministry are vastly different. Paul's view of ministry is inclusive. All persons are ministers, and Christians are supposed to function in the world as the ministers of God. In Paul, one finds no formal hierarchy or order of ministry. Though *Diakonia* is employed in reference to leaders in the Church (I Cor. 3:5) it is also used as a general term for the activity of the rest of the Christians (II Cor. 9:1). Furthermore, Paul does not attempt to give a list of the forms ministry ought to assume. The specific form ministry assumes is determined by need, rather than by any list of the offices of ministry.

Hiltner sees the Church as a long established religious institution. As the Church has developed through the centuries, ministry has become associated with ecclesiastical hierarchy, and a list of traditional offices. Usually when Hiltner uses the term "minister" he is referring to the professional "ordained" clergy. Hiltner does acknowledge the ministry of laymen, yet this is not his central orientation.<sup>6</sup> His three perspectives of ministry are developed through reorganizing the traditional offices of ministry. As opposed to the traditional offices of ministry, Hiltner's three perspectives are more open to new forms of ministry. Yet one must agree that Hiltner's concept of ministry is much more exclusive than Paul's.

The purpose of this chapter has been to propose a revitalized concept of Christian ministry through integrating the approaches of

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<sup>6</sup>Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 28.

Paul the Apostle and Seward Hiltner. Through integrating their thoughts a concept of ministry emerges that is more complete than when their thoughts are understood separately. There are five points through which the mutuality of their opinion flows. Yet Paul and Hiltner maintain separate emphases within these points of contact. Both men perceive ministry as servanthood; in Paul the perception is explicit, whereas in Hiltner it is implicit. Both men assert a multi-dimensional approach to ministry; Paul emphasizes the transformation of ministry through the transcendent presence of God, whereas Hiltner stresses the immanent essential qualities of ministry through three operation-centered perspectives. Both Paul and Hiltner recognize the transcendent and immanent relatedness of ministry; yet Paul dwells on the transcendent unity of ministry, while Hiltner explores immanent connectedness through field theory. Theology and cosmology are inter-mixed in Paul and Hiltner; but Paul's cosmological orientation leads him toward the action-centered implications of ministry, whereas Hiltner's theological tendencies lead him to explore the reflective implications. Both men understand ministry within the context of the Church. But Paul's vision of the Church and ministry are not nearly so formal and structured as Hiltner's. Paul's vision of ministry is broad and inclusive while Hiltner's is more narrow and exclusive.

It is not necessary to choose between Paul and Hiltner's concepts of ministry. Basically, they complement one another, and are capable of integration.



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Ministry is a fundamental concept of the Christian faith. Within the history of the Church, ministry has always held a place of importance. Yet in recent years, ministry has become less and less influential as a concept. Though ministry has remained an important term for the life and work of the Church, few formal studies of ministry as a concept have been written. This dissertation has been an attempt to reevaluate ministry as a central concept of the Christian faith. This dissertation has attempted to discern the essential, conceptual elements of ministry, and propose a revitalized concept of Christian ministry.

This task has been accomplished through examining and integrating the thoughts of two men: Paul the Apostle and Seward Hiltner. These men were chosen for study, for even though they have lived centuries apart, they both have vital concepts of ministry. Even though their perspectives on ministry are vastly different, Paul and Hiltner's concepts of ministry possess some important similarities.

The Pauline approach to ministry was explored first. The discussion of Paul was limited to his seven authentic letters found in the New Testament. *Diakonia* was established as the basic term from which his concept of ministry evolves. After examining the descriptive character of *Diakonia*, Paul's cosmology, as it relates to *Diakonia*,

was explored. The fact that *Diakonia* and Paul's cosmology come together to form a functional role in his thought was also discussed. Finally, Paul's concept of ministry was considered in relation to the various forms of ministry present in his writings.

Having examined Paul's understanding of ministry, Seward Hiltner's concept was then discussed. First, the theoretical framework which comprises the setting for Hiltner's concept of ministry was illuminated. Aspects of this theoretical framework which were explored were Hiltner's theological methodology, his model for organizing theological knowledge and study, and field theory. The next step was to consider Hiltner's three functional perspectives of ministry and their various aspects.

After examining Paul and Hiltner's concepts of ministry, the thoughts of both men were critically evaluated. Both concepts of ministry were evaluated in terms of their strengths and weaknesses toward contributing to a revitalized concept of Christian ministry. It was hoped that through criticism, the essential unity of their concepts would become clear, as well as their unique contributions to the understanding of ministry.

The final step of the dissertation was to integrate Paul and Hiltner's concepts of ministry. This was accomplished in three stages. First, the problem of persistent tensions between the two concepts of ministry was discussed. It was concluded that the only tension which needed resolution was in regard to the two theological and cosmological stances. Seward Hiltner's theological methodology was accepted as

more relevant to contemporary thought patterns.

The second stage involved the identification of points of contact between Paul and Hiltner's concepts of ministry. Five points of contact were noted. Paul and Hiltner's concepts of ministry hold in common the servant motif, a multi-dimensional approach, a concern for immanent and transcendent relatedness, combined theological and cosmological stances, and the context of the Church. These five points of contact are the avenues through which the integration of Paul and Hiltner's concepts of ministry is possible.

The third stage was to demonstrate the complementary nature of the two concepts of ministry through integrating them. This was done by showing the selected emphasis of Paul and Hiltner on each of the five points of contact. While both men hold in common the points of contact their emphases are not the same. Thus it was shown that the two concepts of ministry are complementary and capable of integration. Through integrating Paul and Hiltner's concepts of ministry a whole is formed that is greater than the sum of its parts, a revitalized concept of Christian ministry.

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